

Knocking Amanda Knox – How Newspapers put Women on Trial

By

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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Abstract

For centuries, newspapers have been the basis for passing on information to the general public. They take on the important part of setting the agenda and defining what is news. When it comes to the reporting of crime, it has always been the combination of not only informing the public but also entertaining them. As women offenders are not as common as male offenders, they are more appealing to the media and at the same time represent a more vulnerable group. This especially applies to women accused of murder.

Amanda Knox is one of these women. She became a victim of character assassination, while she was on trial for allegedly murdering her roommate while doing a semester abroad in Italy. Knox's private life was on constant display, exploiting her sexuality, her physical appearance and not fitting into the scheme of perfect womanhood. Through a content analysis of four different publications, over the period of her arrest until her first conviction, her representation in Irish and British newspapers was found to be similar judgmental. Knox was constantly represented in terms of her gender, while the second offender, her former boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito was spared and hid behind Knox's media limelight.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	2
ABSTRACT	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
LIST OF TABLES	6
LIST OF CHARTS	6
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	7
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 SUMMARY	9
1.2 RESEARCH AIMS & QUESTIONS	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 INTRODUCTION	12
2.1 HOW THE MEDIA DEALS WITH CRIME AND THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION	12
2.2 GENDER AND CRIME	14
2.3 HOW IRISH NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON FEMALE OFFENDERS	16
2.4 THE CATHERINE NEVIN CASE	17
2.5 THE WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE ON MEREDITH KERCHER'S DEATH	19
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 OVERVIEW	21
3.2 CONTENT ANALYSIS	22
3.2.1 DESCRIPTION	22
3.2.2 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES	23
3.3 DATA COLLECTION	24
3.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING	29
3.4.1 CODING AND ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES	29
3.4.2 CONSTRUCTION OF A CODING SCHEDULE	31
3.4.3 DATA PREPARATION & ANALYSIS	33
3.5 ETHICS AND CHALLENGES	34
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS	35
4.1 INTRODUCTION	35
4.2 SYNTACTICAL ANALYSIS	35
4.2.1 ARTICLES	35
4.2.2 WORD COUNT	35
4.3 FOCUS POINTS	36
4.4 GRAPHICS AND PICTURES	38
4.4.1 AMOUNT OF PICTURES	38
4.4.2 PICTURE CONTENT	39
4.4.3 KEY WORDS	40
4.5 USE OF LANGUAGE	41
4.5.1 OVERALL TONE (JUDGEMENT)	42
4.5.2 NAMED SUSPECTS	43
4.6 THEMATIC ANALYSIS	44
4.6.1 SEXUALITY & PHYSICAL APPEARANCE	44
4.6.2 IDEAL WOMANHOOD	45
4.6.3 ALCOHOL AND DRUGS	46
4.6.4 NATIONALITY	47
4.7 CONCLUSION	47
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	49

BIBLIOGRAPHY	53
APPENDIX	58
LIST OF ARTICLES	58

List of Tables

TABLE 1 – LIST OF KEYWORDS.....29

TABLE 2 – CODING SCHEDULE 33

List of Charts

CHART 1 – WORD COUNT.....36

CHART 2 – FOCUS POINTS.....37

CHART 3 – USE OF PICTURES.....38

CHART 4 – PICTURE CONTENT.....39

CHART 5 – KEY WORDS.....40

CHART 6 – OVERALL TONE.....42

CHART 7 – SUSPECTS NAMED.....43

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Chapter one: Introduction

The necessity of crime is linked to 'the fundamental conditions of all social life', which makes it not only useful but 'for those conditions to which it is bound, they are themselves indispensable to the normal evolution of morality.' (Durkheim, 2008, p. 541) If there is no 'bad' how can there be any 'good'? Meaning, crime is the price that society pays in exchange for social freedom. However, not every society has the same social norms or moral boundaries. There is no such thing as a crime-free society, if there were, it would be at the cost of social freedom and control (Macdonis and Plummer, 2008). Crime itself can be described as 'the violation of norms a society formally enacts into criminal law' (Macdonis and Plummer, 2008, p. 542).

German philosopher Karl Marx explained how crime produces the criminal justice system. Without criminals there would be no judges, juries and most importantly, no police. In addition to being responsible for many branches of production and indeed innovation:

'The criminal produces an impression, partly moral and partly tragic...and in this way rendered 'a service' by arousing the moral and aesthetic feelings of the public...breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life...in this way he keeps it from stagnation' (Marx, 1894, p. 182).

Violations of social norms, which terminate individual social existence, make murder and its dramatic denouement, the trial, so interesting compared to crimes such as theft or fraud. Murder trials tend to be more brutal, provocative and detestable than others. This results in a spectacular exposition in media organisations competing for public attention. Every media outlet reports differently or gives an impression of doing so.

A wide range of factors regarding the offender and the victim, such as nationality, social status and gender, influence the reporting styles and how stories are presented. The factors of nationality and gender are of particular importance, as will be made clear in chapter three and four.

'Sex status is of greater significance in differentiating criminals from non-criminals than any other trait. If you were asked to use a single trait to predict which children in a town of 10,000 people would become criminals, you would make fewer mistakes if you chose sex status as the trait and

predicted criminality for the males and non-criminality for the females' (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978, p.130).

The fact that most crimes are carried out by young males and women only tend to commit less serious crimes such as shoplifting, make female criminals so interesting for the press and society. Even though the rarity of female offenders in combination with murder, get a lot of attention from the media, discussing female offenders and the gender gap in crime was long ignored. (Heidensohn, 1989) During my research I found that women were largely ignored in terms of crime literature until a few years ago. Looking at existing literature, some of it will be reviewed later on, it can be said that women are portrayed through a distortion and marginalization of their experience. (Heidensohn, 1985)

The excessive contribution to criminality by men, has led to most studies focussing on statistics based on male counterparts. Women have often been lost or ignored in the public debate. But due to the growing women's emancipation, there is a rise in female crime and an overall change in the nature of their crimes.

'The new female criminal is more a social invention than an empirical reality...the proposed relationship between the women's movement and crime is needed tenuous and even vacuous.' (Heidensohn, 1985, p. 580)

With these feminist ideas in mind, gender roles are regarded particularly crucial when it comes to the depiction of homicide. The fundamental idea of a woman, a mother, a wife, potentially taking someone's life seems disturbing to many. Based on their beliefs that the female is considered 'the prey of the species' (De Beauvoir, 1949, p. 391) the act of killing therefore goes against the definition of their essential nature. It must be recognised, that not only does gender run 'as a fault-line through every crime category, every victimisation experience and every criminal justice response' (Jordan, 2005, p.225), the real causes behind committing crimes cannot be explored without the 'social context of patriarchy', as this fundamentally impacts the shaping of individuals and their social environment. (Jordan, 2005)

1.1 Summary

This dissertation is structured in different chapters, starting off with chapter one on research questions, as well as the general idea behind the study. In the second chapter, relevant literature is assessed and reviewed. Chapter three describes the methodology behind the content analysis and details, such as the construction of the analytical categories and the coding schedule. Chapter four takes a closer look at the findings of the analysis and outlines significant results. Finally, chapter five

presents a concluding argument based on the research findings, which then leads back to a review of the research questions presented in chapter one and a recommendation for future studies.

1.2 Research Aims & Questions

The media is constantly present in the public sphere and therefore the consumer's daily life. This presence impacts the reader's perception of news, depending on how the media deals with it. With crime news specifically, the audience bases their beliefs on the construction of the media's reality and how criminal behaviour and the people allegedly involved are displayed. Female offenders are often chosen to make the headlines, based on the fact of their gender and the uniqueness of their crime. Despite the media's significant influence, only a small number of studies have examined the issue of gender when it comes to the coverage of crime. This involves examining stereotypes and social norms, plus how they effect the responses made by the criminal justice system. (Pollak and Kubrin, 2007)

The aim of this research is to explore how the media and newspapers specifically, report and cover murder trials that include female offenders. This will be observed by conducting a content analysis of how several newspaper articles reported the internationally known Amanda Knox case from 2007. Knox, from the U.S, and two other men allegedly killed Knox's roommate, Meredith Kercher, during a semester abroad in Italy. Because of Knox's appearance and gender, she quickly became the poster girl of the trial, which lasted nearly a decade. The research will focus on the aims, broken down into the following research questions:

1. How does the media deal with the reporting of female offenders?
2. Is there a difference between the reporting style of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers on murder trials involving female offenders?
3. Does the manner of reporting alter the image of the female offender in the public eye?

1.3 Expected Results

The research provides a detailed analysis on the reportage of murder trials involving female offenders and how they are displayed in the press. Through conducting a content analysis, a social-scientific approach is adopted, which will examine how the press dealt with the case of Amanda Knox. The findings of said content analysis, which involves articles both from broadsheets and tabloids, will be critically discussed. The goal is to discover whether there is a possible difference between the newspaper's use of language and judgment, which might be affecting their style of

reporting and the overall coverage of the trial and specifically the display of Amanda Knox.

Chapter two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The media has always had a strong interest in crime, taking advantage of the natural curiosity of humans in the spectacular and indeed tragic fortune of others. There are several factors that are important to the print media in reporting on a case. Readers do not experience this selection process. He or she only reads what is being shown, without questioning why that case made the front page. The overly reported niche of females accused of murder, seem to be the perfect example for the press to gain attention, not only to use this natural interest but to sensationalise the idea of a woman potentially taking someone else's life. Still, not every murder makes the headlines and not every suspect is displayed in the same way. This strongly depends on who supposedly committed the crime and the media reporting on the case.

This chapter examines the media's interest and the coverage of crime and how female offenders in particular are depicted. It continues with the effect the media has on the forming of public opinion and how this influences the method of delivering information on crime, as well as why female criminals create such a public interest and what role society itself plays in the framing of stereotypical categorisation of females. Coverage of a well-known Irish murder trial will be analysed, the case of Catherine Nevin also known as the 'black widow'. Finally, a study on the English Wikipedia article of Meredith Kercher will be examined, which provides the basis for chapter three and the content analysis in form of a case study on the trial of Amanda Knox.

2.1 How the Media deals with Crime and the Formation of Public Opinion

Marsh and Melville's (2014) *Crime, Justice and the Media*, examined the media landscape and how newspapers, TV, and other media formats are dominated by reflecting crimes, criminals and other aspects of criminal behaviour. The interest of the general population in true and fictional crime is enormous but looking back in history, it is not a new phenomenon. Serial killers such as Jack the Ripper and many others were glorified and caught the mass' interest to the present day. The fascination has not changed, but the formats they are covered by have. TV programmes include criminal storylines and newspaper headlines are filled with news from the world. The findings from a US crime study in 2001, conducted by Dorfman, showed that 76% of the American public said their views of crime are based on news media reporting. Only 22% based their information on personal experience. (Marsh and Melville, 2014)

Visual media is gaining more and more importance, with more than half of the three to four year olds in Britain owning a TV in their room and using it on the daily basis for the average of five hours. (Reiner, 2007)

‘Public opinion has always played a significant role in the administration of criminal justice, and information about public attitudes is clearly important to politicians and criminal justice professionals’ (Roberts and Hough, 2005, p. 2).

For a theoretical approach Marsh and Melville, take a close look at the emergence of mass media research and at the creation of what has been named the hypodermic syringe model. This model was based on the research from the turn of the twentieth century up to the 1930s. It attempted to demonstrate how the mass media has direct influence on the audience, which can be compared to the level of addiction by the usage of drugs. The hypodermic syringe model faced some heavy criticism as it left out important factors such as the influence of friends, family and work colleagues. In order to improve the existing model, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) created the ‘two step flow model’ and brought in the aspect of social relationships and the importance to the consumer’s media response. With the growing impact of social media and other technological developments, the effects of the media on their audience have become more powerful. This also includes their impact on the formation of the audience’s opinion. (Marsh and Melville, 2014)

A survey carried out by the British Crime Survey in 2009, found out that even though the general crime rate had decreased and the statistics on murder had dropped by 17%, the audience’s fear of crime being out of control still exists. (Flatley et al., 2010) Participants believed the rates have gone up, even though the opposite was the case. (Social Trends, 2011) This especially applies to readers of tabloid rather than of broadsheet newspapers, according to the British Crime Survey data, conducted by Green in 2006. This provides an interesting finding on the link between the choice of newspaper and how the readers perceive crime, as well as the media’s impact on public opinion when it comes to trends in society. (Marsh and Melville, 2014)

The reason for the perception of a rising crime rate is due to the way the media reports crime. Especially in high profile cases involving celebrities or serial killers, the style of reporting tends to lean towards sensationalism. This creates a distorted image, as ‘the public acknowledges the importance of the media as a source of information about crime.’ (Roberts & Hough, 2005, p.11) The style of reporting, associated with the house style of the newspaper, is based on the type of crime being reported. Business crime or credit card frauds are less attractive and therefore less likely to appear on the front page. Crucial and brutal crimes on the other hand,

tend to be more gripping and grab the reader's attention. Marsh and Melville go on saying that benefit fraud for example, is being displayed as scandalous, using several examples from the British tabloid *Daily Mail*. One of them is a headline that appeared in the newspaper on the January 19th 2013: 'Mother-of-two who posed as struggling single parent to claim £30,000 exposed as benefits cheat when she posted picture of Cyprus wedding on Facebook' (Daily Mail, 2013). Marsh and Melville's conclusion is 'that the public needs better information about criminal justice policies and sentencing' (Marsh and Melville, 2014).

2.2 Gender and Crime

Marsh and Melville also examine how issues of gender affect crime reporting. The stereotypical offender is male; this is supported by statistics from England and Wales, which show that 80% of those convicted are men. Looking at the figures from 2010, over 250,000 women were arrested for notifiable offences, while the figure for males arrested are nearly five times as high, with over 1.2 million arrests.

The numbers drift even more apart in examination of the figures from the British Ministry of Justice this year, where only 3,815 females were imprisoned while 81,476 prisoners were men, the female percentage only takes up less than 5%. As murder is the most serious and violent type of crime, Tuchman (1978) argued that the media's interest in female murderers is a 'symbolic annihilation' meaning, that 'the media ignore, trivialize or condemn women' and that 'this aspect of the media has an effect on the way that news about offending women is reported' (p. 88).

Even though the figures are low, the media's interest in female offenders is high, with one-third of violent crime stories being about women. Females committing crimes are less likely and therefore paradoxically more interesting to the media. This phenomenon is based on female biology and the fact of the menstrual cycle, and the option of being a mother. As a result females have a lower level of physical aggression compared to men. Linked to the female biology are the assumptions that women are 'naturally caring, emotional and maternal'. This view has been critiqued in the past, as 'what is natural is morally right and desirable' (Marsh and Melville, 2014, p. 88).

The two authors also bring in a feminist point of view by saying that these aforementioned attributes 'are accepted as natural and not socially constructed... this evolutionary explanation naturalises and justifies the continuation of sexist attitudes to and perceptions of female criminals' (Marsh and Melville, 2014, p. 89).

The media plays an essential role in how criminals are perceived and treated before court. Female behaviour is often interpreted through the lens of biological status, such as premenstrual syndrome (PMS), battered woman syndrome, post-natal depression or infanticide. Some of these conditions have been successfully used

before British courts, as mitigation for crimes involving shoplifting or even murder. This can cause a potential simplification of understanding of crimes committed by women. (Marsh and Melville, 2014)

The authors continue, by noting how reporting in a sensationalised way and the particular use of language are the key factors when portraying female criminals and the social control that comes with it. In the news sector, especially newspapers and TV, cases are often described as 'stories'. This form of storytelling makes it easier for the audience to understand and evaluate the information they receive. Newspaper sales rely on the 'stock stories', which follow 'a well established path'. According to Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991) despite the emergence of new evidence, journalists tend to stick to the original direction of the story. This especially applies to stories involving female offenders: 'often these stock stories come in the form of binary classifications steeped in gothic storytelling.' (Marsh and Melville, 2014, p. 90) The categorisation tends to be overly dramatic and can be compared to Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, a character who liked to manipulate and was being displayed as a sort of monster. On the other hand there is the hopeless romantic stereotype, doing everything to keep a relationship alive. An important aspect, which is often the media's main focus, is the appearance in order to categorise the offender and present her either as the ugly duckling or the classic femme fatale. There are also stories where newspapers concentrate on the aspects of femininity and madness or evil, all based on previously discussed factors of biology and psychology. (Frigon, 1995)

During the 1970s Mulvey researched the concept of 'the male gaze', viewing women in the media through the eyes of a man. The male gaze is based on the idea of framing women in the media for the benefit of men, referring to focus on the physical attraction of the female criminal rather than on the actual crime. (Marsh and Melville, 2014)

The publication *Media and Body Image* from Wykes and Gunter (2004), which is also mentioned in Marsh and Melville's publication, concentrates on what role the media plays in the construction of social femininity. Feminine stereotypes such as being youthful, slim and heterosexual, are used to transfer a powerful and persuasive message. These stereotypes are on display when reporting on a female offender, while the male offender hardly ever faces these issues. (Wykes and Gunter, 2004) Going back to the male gaze, a tool often used to analyse newspaper articles, to separate the physical appearance from attractive to unattractive. There are many cases involving female murder trials where the male gaze can be applied to, a case study in the next chapter will take a closer look at the how the newspaper works with these categorisations and what impact they have on their audience.

2.3 How Irish Newspapers Report on Female Offenders

A lot of content circulates around the topic of female offenders, but Lynsey Black and her work, *Paper Women: The Representation of Female Offenders in Irish Newspapers*, from 2009, provides a different approach. Black examined the role of the media as an influential institution in modern society and the power it has through constructing a new reality based on crime reporting. It also takes a short look at the role the media plays in the forming of public perception. Her research contained observations on different Irish cases with female offenders and the way in which the Irish media was involved, as well as how the print media dealt with the reporting of those cases and how the reporting connected with the different styles of the Irish tabloids and broadsheets. This also includes how these newspapers displayed female offenders in the past. Most importantly Black merged her findings with a feminist critique.

The Irish newspapers investigated in Black's content analysis, were the *Irish Times*, the *Irish Daily Star*, the *Evening Herald* and the *Irish Independent*. The analysis was conducted over the period of one month in which over a total of 234 articles were analysed. Over 97% of the articles reported on female offenders, while 27% (63 articles) did not have a female offender as their main focus. The reason for the high numbers in reporting of female offenders by tabloids, is based on Reiner's (2007) finding that the overall media, but specially tabloids, set their sights more on criminal events involving women than men.

The largest number of articles relating to female criminals was published in the tabloid *Irish Daily Star*, while the broadsheet *Irish Times* had the lowest. This is based on the fact that tabloids focus more on the reporting of crime and other news involving violence, than broadsheet newspapers. (Dahlgren, 1992) However the *Irish Independent*, formally a broadsheet, featured more articles about female criminals than the *Evening Herald*, scoring the second place with nearly 27%. The most common offence reported at over 80%, was murder. This is due to the finding, that the most unusual crimes make the headlines more often. (Duwe, 2000) Crimes females are more often convicted of are less reported about, according to the feminist criminologists Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004).

The headlines used referred mostly to the nature of motherhood or other caring roles such as nurses, taking up nearly 17% of all headlines, while using words such as 'mum', 'mother' or 'pregnant'. A third of all articles portrayed the women 'through a prism of motherhood' and are part of the evidence. This is also connected to the fact that female criminals are more likely to be reported as mentally ill, compared to male

offenders. Peter (2006, p.284) explains that: 'a man is construed as bad or evil because he violated a criminal act; however, a woman is labelled bad or evil or explained as mad or victim because she violated the social constructions of gender.' Often a mother's criminal actions are justified by acting on the basis for the good of her children, which is used in order to gain the reader's sympathy.

Another factor that a significant amount of articles shared, was the mention of alcohol or the suggestion of alcohol being an influential factor in the offence, sometimes regarded as 'responsible for the disorganisation of the female offender's life.' (Black, 2009, p. 42) The analysis found that the usage of drugs, are also blamed for the loss of responsibility and contribute to a negative portrayal of the female offender. Newspapers base their stories on the fact that female criminals are more likely to struggle with addiction than men. (Chesney- Lind and Pasko, 2004).

Finally, the offender's nationality and ethnicity was also prominent in the content analysis. Nineteen articles (8.1%) described offences, which were committed in Ireland by women belonging to an ethnic minority, while most of the articles were found in the *Irish Daily Star*. This especially applies to female offenders from Romania. Two-thirds of the tabloid's articles are on Romanian offenders, more than any other minor ethnic group. Even though the committed offences were rather small, the newspaper is more likely to report on Romanian women committing crime than offenders from other ethnic groups. (Black, 2009) The pattern of using the offender's nationality appears again in the *Irish Daily Star*, pointing out the importance of nationality and religion to the audience. This style of reporting or 'nuance of language' as Black calls it, was only found by the *Irish Daily Star*. (p.46)

2.4 The Catherine Nevin Case

How the Irish media deals with female murderers, illustrates the Catherine Nevin case in 2000. Nevin, who was named the 'black widow', referring to a dangerous species of spiders, was the central character in one of many cases where the media focused more on gender than on the actual crime. In the 2000 publication *The Black Widow - The Catherine Nevin Story*, author Niamh O'Connor, former journalist with the *Irish Examiner*, takes a look at the investigation and how the media reported the subsequent court case.

Nevin was convicted of murdering her husband at a pub in County Wicklow in 1996, she was accused of soliciting three men to murder him. This was not her first offence. O'Connor nicknamed Nevin the 'female Walter Mitty' and wrote about Nevin's own cast in the role of a victim. Before her conviction for the murder of her husband,

Nevin was connected with several other Garda investigations, playing her favourite role of the femme fatale. As these investigations had nothing to do with the actual trial, they were not included in the book of evidence, based on strict legal criteria. (O'Conner, 2000)

The case, which involved over 170 witnesses, started on January 12th in 2000. The media presence was enormous, both reflecting and also swelling the public interest. Two weeks later, the trial collapsed as a man reported that the jury's deliberations could be heard from the balcony. This was not the only setback. The second trial was dismissed when a member of the jury became ill, and the list goes on. Nevin herself was 'bemused' by these circumstances as she thought she would never stand trial. But this was not the case. It was 'four trials in one'. With the duration of 42 days, the murder trial was the longest in Irish legal history. Nevin's appearance, even after being hospitalised for a week, was ever flawless. This was one of the many mind games she conducted for keeping up her public appearance and the media's interest going. When entering the court room she was keen on smiling at any given moment, flashing her eyes sideways, in order to display herself innocently while never directly looking at the target, even when she was convicted of murdering her husband. (O'Conner, 2000)

By the start of the final trial 'reporters were prevented from mentioning Catherine's appearance, but it was obvious that she flourished under the glare of the cameras...she even had her hair done every morning before court' (O'Connor, 2000, p. 128). Due to the significant amount of publicity the case had drawn, judge Mella Carroll banned all newspapers on commenting and publishing photographs for the duration of Catherine Nevin's trial. But the damage had already been done according to Nevin's barrister, Patrick McEntee SC. 'There was no way his client could have gotten a fair trial because of the adverse media publicity' he said, according to O'Connor (p. 253). Justice Geoghegan on the other hand said that while there was a large amount of publicity regarding the case, which was indeed 'inappropriate and inexcusable', there was no serious risk of Nevin not receiving a fair trial. (O'Connor, 2000)

Justice Carroll justified her restrictions on the basis of Nevin's right to a fair trial, which was being 'far outweighed the media's right to comment on her appearance or demeanour and she was satisfied that under the Constitution, it was her duty to protect the rights of an accused person and that she had the powers to make the order.' (Irish Times, 13 February 2000)

The media judgement was based on Catherine Nevin's first trial where the media, especially newspapers, published 'colour pieces' which only focused on her appearance and less on the trial's facts. This applied to all newspapers not merely

the tabloids. The broadsheet the *Irish Times* was also included in the judgement, even though their counsel Una Ni Raifeartaigh, described the *Irish Times* coverage as 'neither inaccurate nor unfair nor suggestive of guilt'.

Judge Carroll said it was the *Evening Herald* and the *Irish Independent* specifically, which forced this ruling. The judge described it as: 'the worst kind of tabloid journalism designed solely to sell newspapers without any regard to Mrs Nevin's dignity as a human person' (Carroll, 2000). The ban did not include radio or TV coverage, as no complaints were registered about them. (Irish Times, 13 February 2000)

2.5 The Wikipedia Article on Meredith Kercher's Death

Connecting with the case study following this chapter, the publication *Counter Narratives and Controversial Crimes: The Wikipedia Article on the 'Murder of Meredith Kercher'*, needed to be included in this review. The study conducted by Ruth Page, which was published in the *Language and Literature* journal in 2014, provides useful information for the case study of Amanda Knox later on.

Amanda Knox, an American student and her former Italian boyfriend, as well as another man, were charged with the murder of her roommate Meredith Kercher, a British student. Both women were a semester abroad in Italy when the murder happened. Up until this point, no one, apart from those directly involved, know exactly what happened.

Page (2014) analysed 'the linearity and the teller-ship' of the English and Italian Wikipedia articles about Meredith Kercher's death. The online encyclopaedia is used as a positioning counter and as a dominant narrative. The way of telling a story 'may alter according to its teller, audience and the social or historical context in which the story is told. But multiple versions of the "same" events are not always valued in the same way: some versions may become established as dominant accounts, whilst others are allied.' (Page, 2014, p. 2) This aspect gets more interesting when mentioning that the story of Meredith Kercher's death has never been solved, and yet there is only one article on her death available on Wikipedia. The article has changed multiple times since Kercher's death in 2007, depending on the outcome of the trial and the following re-trials, which were going on for nearly a decade. The display of the suspect's involved, and their perception by the public display as either victim or villain and most importantly, the national context. The victim was British, the main accused American, the murder itself happened in Italy. (Page, 2014)

To take a closer look at the language chosen by the editors, Page conducted a micro-linguistic analysis of the structure of four chosen versions of the article, including citations and quoted speech. The English Wikipedia article for instance, was edited 7958 times by 967 distinct users, between 2007 and 2013. Page even calls it 'an editing war', which basically made it impossible to edit from a neutral point of view.

Wikipedia themselves describe a neutral point of view as: 'representing fairly, proportionately, and as far as possible without bias, all significant views that have been published by reliable sources.' (Wikipedia contributors, 2013a) Editors could not maintain this neutral point of view as the article pointed to different versions of the crime. Out of every article, Knox got the highest word count out of the three accused, while the dominance of the national context of the event, had changed over time. (Page, 2014)

Framing the bigger picture, the European press sensationalised Amanda Knox, their 'guilty' stance caused occasioned heavy criticism of 'anti-american' bias. Page showed, that the dominant narratives within the British media shifted when new evidence was discovered; which it should be said, changed the stance towards Knox accordingly. The English Wikipedia article of Kercher's death has the highest amount of reliable sources. (Page, 2014)

Chapter three: Methodology

3.1 Overview

Females are less likely to commit a crime (Marsh and Melville, 2014), especially something as brutal as murder. This unique aspect (the comparative 'rarity' of the event) makes murder trials involving females so newsworthy for the media and their audience.

As the research field of female offenders is quite large, the research problem is defined in the multiple questions, which were mentioned in the introducing chapter paragraph 1.2. With the basis of the literature review in chapter two, which explores how the media generally reports on female offenders on trial, the study seeks to examine the journalistic practices behind it. This is done by investigating the reporting style, which can impact the consumption but also the public's perception (questioning the innocence of the offender). Which also includes the role of news coverage in relation to social ideologies. Finally, the commercial interest and the entertainment factor behind the media's reporting about females on trial will also be investigated.

The case of Amanda Knox is the perfect example of the media system popularising the trial and displaying a 'mad or bad' image of the female offender to their audience. In order to take a closer look into the media reportage on murder trials, several articles written on the Amanda Knox case will be investigated. Common factors as well as the differences between the chosen newspapers will be displayed. The research concentrates on newspapers, as there is a large amount of examinable content available on this case. The study also focuses on the international reportage and how this may impact the public's image of the offender. Both the accused and the victim are females and therefore provide the ideal basis for analysing if there is a gender gap in crime reporting.

The method used for this case study, is a content analysis of different articles, which were published by Irish and British newspapers during the period of the first trial. The duration for the study period was set from the day of the arrest in November 2007 to a week after the conviction of Amanda Knox and the other accused in December of 2009. The case selected for the content analysis, is the widely known Amanda Knox case.

Amanda Knox, an American student and her former Italian boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito as well as another man called Rudy Guede, were charged with the murder of her roommate, the British student Meredith Kercher. Both women were on a study semester abroad in the small Italian town of Perugia. Up until this point, nobody

knows what exactly happened. Even though Knox is free now and was finally found not guilty in 2015, she was the poster girl of this case and was widely displayed in the media as a 'she-devil' (an expression found in one of the sample articles for the content analysis). Amanda is American and the victim Meredith was British, therefore a lot of different content as well as different reporting styles can be found on the case, which provides an ideal angle to compare different newspaper articles.

For the analysis British and Irish articles were chosen. While Irish reporting adopted a neutral stance in terms of nationality, the British reporting may have been influenced by the victim's nationality, which was also British.

The analysis is going to look at the differences and common factors in newspaper reporting on Amanda Knox and on the case overall.

3.2 Content Analysis

In order to understand the process of conducting a content analysis, the following paragraphs give a brief explanation of content analysis research and the strengths and weaknesses it brings to the research. Overall the study takes inspiration from the six steps which are required in order to successfully undertake a quantitative content analysis, according to the Anders Hansen's 1998 publication *Mass Communication Research Methods*.

3.2.1 Description

There are several definitions available when it comes to the research method of content analysis. An often quoted definition, which was published by Bernard Berelson in *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (1952), is the following: 'content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.' (p. 18) Anders Hansen (1998) describes it in a shorter but similar way, when he says it is 'a method for the systematic analysis of communication content' (p. 90) while Krippendorff goes further and says: 'content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context' (1980, p.21). One of the first registered studies using a content analysis was a Swedish research project in the 18th century, where researchers studied 90 hymns of unknown authors. (Krippendorff, 1980) The formal method of the content analysis known today was fully developed in the years between the First and the Second World Wars. According to Hansen, the main goal of a content analysis is to examine 'how news, drama, advertising and entertainment output reflect social and cultural issues, values and phenomena' (p. 92) and 'to count

occurrences of specified dimensions and analyse the relationships between these dimensions' (p.98). Some sociologists such as Harold Lasswell in the 1930s, tried to measure the 'cultural temperature' of society through the use of content analysis, in order to get some insight behind the elements, which are involved in the forming of public opinion. (Hansen, 1998)

In the late 1960s George Gerbner and his team analysed and monitored American television and the symbolic environment behind it, to get insight into the media trends and developments during that time. Gerbner did not only conduct a content analysis on American television programmes but he also integrated a survey into his studies, with the goal of finding out the audience's beliefs and attitudes as well as their influence, based on 'how far television cultivates certain world-views in its audience' (Hansen, 1998, p.93).

Today content analysis is useful in studies of media organisation content and output from industry professionals, as well as all other types of media involved in the production of news content and the processing of similar media content. Often the method is combined with observational methods within news organisations, or interviews (with either media professionals or other sources). (Hansen, 1998)

3.2.2 Strengths and Weaknesses

Content analysis methods have been criticised in the past due to its quantitative bias and perceived weaknesses in reflecting or producing a theory of meaning and significance. Hansen describes this problem as 'how far content analysis could be used for making informed inferences either from texts to conditions, or from texts to their social impact, influence, interpretation reception' (p. 94). In other words, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of the content, which was originally intended by the producers, or how the consumers read and decode these meanings. (Hansen, 1998)

Another challenge is the 'notion of objectivity' as an outcome, an impossible goal in scientific research and therefore also within content analysis. There is no way the analysis can look at everything for which a text could be analysed, therefore the research needs certain restrictions in the form of theoretical frameworks and circumscribed ideas by the researcher. Later definitions of the content analysis method suggested, that objectivity really means that the analysis should be 'systematic' (Holsti, 1969) or 'replicable' (Krippendorff, 1980). Conducting a content analysis can help to provide 'some indications of relative prominences and absences of key characteristics in media texts', which are all based on the defined framework and its interpretation by the researchers. Nevertheless, there is actual meaning and 'social significance' behind the findings of adequately constructed and operationalized content analysis projects.

3.3 Data Collection

As aforementioned, several articles of the Irish and British press about the Amanda Knox case will be used in the content analysis. The reason for choosing this case is the brutality and mystery combined with a female villain, which caused worldwide media attention and therefore coverage by all sorts of media outlets. The entertainment factor of the trial was the female accused Knox herself, who was displayed as the 'poster girl' of the case. She experienced major coverage from all newspapers but with mixed reporting styles and hints of judgement in terms of her innocence.

The reason for only including newspapers articles in the content analysis, is due to the large amount of international coverage on the trial. In addition, the trial was running (on and off) for nearly a decade with several re-trials ordered. Therefore the research had to be narrowed down to press coverage only, as an analysis of all media coverage would not have been possible within the given timeframe of this study.

To source the sample of articles suited for the content analysis, various factors for the selection of the newspapers were considered. The newspapers featured in the content analysis are both from broadsheet and tabloid quality. The chosen newspapers from each country include the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mail on Sunday* plus *The Daily Telegraph* from the United Kingdom, and the *Irish Examiner* and the online publication *BreakingNews.ie* from Ireland.

The different content characteristics provided by the newspapers are needed, as these segmentations are analysed for the diversity of their audience and size as well as the potential impact the newspapers have on their readers. The audience type itself refers to aspects such as age, social class, gender, race and profession, while the audience size based on either mass or minority. (Hansen, 1998)

The geographical reach is portrayed through the fact that the content analysis contains articles from both Britain and Ireland. This is important as the victim Meredith Kerscher was a British citizen, while the main accused Amanda Knox is American, which hypothetically, makes Ireland a 'neutral' country when it comes to the reporting on the case. Due to the victim's nationality, there was far more coverage by the British than the Irish press. Nevertheless, the differences and the level of objectivity of both countries will be investigated, and how far the accuser and victim's nationality can be taken into consideration when looking at the tone of the articles.

Finally, the accessibility and availability also played a role in the selection process of the media and the titles. As this is a retrospective analysis, looking at events from 2007 and further on, all articles were downloaded online from the LexisNexis' platform and from the Irish Newspaper Archive. The latter permits analysis of a digital version of the hard copy of the *Irish Examiner*. The articles by the

Daily Mail and the *Mail on Sunday* as well as the publications by *BreakingNews.ie* and the *Daily Telegraph* have all been taken from their online archives.

As aforementioned, the media coverage of the press on the case was significant, therefore the timeline for selecting the newspaper articles had to be narrowed down. This was done by only considering articles, which were published between two major events in the case: the day of the arrest and the day after the conviction of the first trial. An extra week was added after the conviction in order to permit analysis of later published international articles. The time period for the study was therefore:

November 9th 2007 - December 13th 2009

According to the Italian police, Amanda Knox, her then Italian boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito and an alleged friend of Kercher, Rudy Guede, were officially arrested on November 9th in 2007. A first trial conviction followed more than two years later, on December 5th in 2009. The chosen time period was between the day of the arrest and the week after the conviction, as the research looks at how the reporting changed over time, in terms of its subjective stance and depictions of the public display of the offenders, with the main focus lying on Amanda Knox, the only female accused in this trial.

Bauer (2000) suggests three potential issues, which can occur during the process of sampling, these are: the size of the sample, the representativeness and the unit. As the research centres on how the British and Irish newspapers covered the Amanda Knox case, leading up to and the convictions at the trial, my hypotheses suggests that newspapers who lean towards a more sensationalising style of reporting, will tend to focus more on the offenders sexuality than the actual facts that arose during the course of the trial. The suggested measurement is: 'guilty', 'neutral' or 'not guilty'. While guilty clearly indicates Knox being involved in the killing, neutral takes an objective stand based on official facts. Not guilty on the other hand, means Knox was wrongfully accused of a crime she did not commit. There are also factors, which potentially influence the newspapers position, such as the victim's or the offender's nationality. Therefore the method chosen is the simple representative sampling option. Out of the British and Irish newspapers, one mass-market tabloid newspaper was chosen plus one 'up-market' broadsheet newspaper; representative, each in turn of their respective market segments.

The reason for choosing the aforementioned newspapers is not only due to the foundation of the research questions and the theoretical framework behind them, but also on the basis of their representativeness. The limited timeframe of the research does not permit analysis of all given articles published in the period of the arrest and the first conviction. Counted so far are 903 articles published in the UK press and a 117 in Ireland, simply, major mentions of Amanda Knox. In order to limit the amount of

content, different newspaper genres, one popular tabloid and one broadsheet newspaper, were chosen to represent their segment in each of the two countries. The sampling choice is defended on the grounds of the newspaper's diversity in terms demographic reach.

Owned by the *Daily Mail and General Trust*, Britain's first daily newspaper was founded in 1896 by Lord Northcliffe. The *Mail's* Scottish and Irish editions of the paper were established in 1947 and 2006. The *Daily Mail* (and the Sunday version, the *Mail on Sunday*) is part of Britain's 'popular press' and mainly features news, entertainment and political items. With the combination of a low retail price and a wide collection of 'promotional gimmicks' (Crunchbase.com, 2016), the paper reached daily circulation figures of over 1.5 million. (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2016) Their audience is mainly aged 65 and over, which takes up 50% of their total print readership. The audience type is rated as ABC1C2 adults, which mainly consists of the lower middle class market and the skilled working class people (Networks.org.uk, 2016) which according to the classification of the National Readership Survey (NRS) are supervisors, clericals, junior managerial positions, administrative or professionals and 'skilled manual workers'. The middle market tabloid newspapers, consider themselves centre-right.

The Daily Telegraph belongs to the *Telegraph Media Group*, which is a one of the leading newspaper publisher in the United Kingdom. The Telegraph Media Group, which operates as a joint venture between Hollywood Holdings Limited and Press Holdings Ltd., is owned by Press Acquisitions, which is controlled by Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay. (Bloomberg.com, 2016) *The Daily Telegraph* and its Sunday version, *The Sunday Telegraph*, position themselves in the branch of quality newspapers and have an average circulation of over 490,000 issues. They portray their audience as well travelled and affluent ABC1 and ABC1C2 readers. Compared to the *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph* has a similar audience in terms of age, with readers' aged 65 and over, taking up 57.7% of their total readership. (Networks.org.uk, 2016) The paper supports the conservative line.

I originally intended to represent Irish tabloids with the *Irish Daily Mirror*, as they published highly interesting articles about Knox in the past, which were discovered while searching their content on Google. Unfortunately, the articles on Google do not date back to the needed timeframe. Another unpleasant aspect was, that LexisNexis does not differentiate adequately between Irish and British editions of the newspapers, though Irish edition content is distinct on a daily basis from its British counterpart. This is true also of other Irish tabloid editions of British newspapers. The *Irish Daily Mirror* was available only on microfilm (provided by the National Library Ireland). Having visited the library and looked at microfilm editions, as all editions of

the newspaper between 2007 and 2009 needed to be examined individually, I decided that such analysis was impossible within the given timeframe.

Therefore the newspaper was replaced with the well-established online platform, *BreakingNews.ie*. Alone of the selected Irish publications, *BreakingNews.ie*, is known for its tabloid reporting style and also its focus on entertainment and sports. The Irish publishing group Landmark Media Investments owns the online platform, and a number of other regional newspapers such as the *Irish Examiner*. (BreakingNews.ie, 2014) With over 510,00 unique visitors per month and 86,731 daily page views, the website mostly attracts visitors from Ireland (85.6%) and the United Kingdom (4.5%). (BreakingNews.ie, 2016) The online publication has a strong social media presence, with 400,00 fans on Facebook and 187,00 followers on Twitter.

Finally, the Irish quality newspaper selected for the analysis is the *Irish Examiner*. The newspaper was founded in 1841 and was owned by the *Thomas Crosbie Holdings Group* up till 2013, when Landmark Media Investments acquired it. With an average daily circulation of 32,648 (NewsBrandsIreland.ie, 2015), concentrated in the Munster region, the paper mainly reports news and current affairs. Fifty-three per cent of their audience are categorized as ABC1F readers, while more than half of them being 'the main shopper in their household, the people who make the purchase decisions' (Irish Examiner, 2016).

Another reason for using articles provided by online archives, was the idea that nowadays newspapers are largely represented online and are shifting more and more towards the online trend. The press landscape has undergone a digital revolution in the past decades and it keeps on growing. As on their homepage there is no limitation in terms of space, as in the printed edition, more content (larger headlines, more picture content) can be added and the opportunity of providing additional background information and expert opinions are given. In addition, the number of people consuming news 'on the go' has increased massively over the last years. This especially applies to young people, who consume and check headlines on their mobile phones or tablets, rather than buying a newspaper. But the trend has also reached the older generation, with over a million 50 to 65 year olds in Britain consuming news online. (Barclays.com, 2016)

It's the *Daily Mail* and their mobile version *MailOnline*, the most visited English-language website worldwide, that attracts more readers than their print and desktop version combined. This resulted in other newspapers 'beefing up' their websites and mobile versions. This expansion also included providing older articles through their own online archives. (Barclays.com, 2016)

The articles downloaded from the *MailOnline's* archive, and all the other archives used, were selected on the basis of Amanda Knox receiving the most press coverage, over and above the other two accused.

It is hoped, that the chosen newspapers cover the spectrum for the reporting in the United Kingdom and Ireland and also represent different reporting styles, based on their classification as either a mass-market 'tabloid' or up-market 'quality' newspaper.

Articles with a word count under 200 will be excluded from the study. This is based on the fact that, according to Hansen (1998), the method of content analysis is for analysing large bodies of texts and that articles with a lower word count therefore do not seem representative.

Finally, due to the high amount of coverage on the case, 20 articles of each newspaper or online publication, which are randomly picked, will be analysed in the content analysis. As some articles were taken from the online archives of the newspapers, they may have varying headlines (due to limited amount of space in the print version) but contain the same content in terms of text and pictures, as the online versions were mostly published before the official print versions.

An essential part of the research was to clearly define the selection criteria and rules, which are needed to conduct the content analysis. The female offender in this case is Amanda Knox, as she is the only woman out of the three accused. In order to analyse how the media represented her during the duration of her first trial, a list of key words and focus points were identified. The research focuses on news items, which include:

- Amanda Knox as the major focus out of the three accused
- Amanda Knox's arrest, her conviction and her time in prison
- Amanda Knox's and Meredith Kercher's nationality
- Amanda Knox's sexuality and drug use
- Amanda Knox's appearance and looks during the trial
- Information about the general phenomenon of female offenders, mentioning Amanda Knox as a specific example

The following list of key words should help to analyse if there is any potential difference in language relating to the gender of the offender and language change from the day of the arrest to the day of the official conviction. The list was created by selecting a small sample of articles and marking out words and expression, which have experienced a high amount of usage in the articles I examined. As this list of key words is based on a small sample (a total of 10 articles) they may not be representative for the other, to be later analysed articles and does not necessarily mean they will appear in these as well. The list includes the following words, expressions and nicknames:

'Female'	'Amanda Knox' or 'Knox'
'American' or 'America'	'British' or 'Britain'
'Sex crime'	'Drugs'
'Murder'	'Alleged'
'Guilty'	'Foxy Knoxy' or 'Knoxy'
'She-Devil'	'Student'

Table 1 – List of Keywords

3.4 Data Analysis and Coding

The following paragraphs explain the overall process of coding, in order to construct a coding schedule based on the analytical categories, which need to be set out before conducting the content analysis. Afterwards the preparation of the data and the analysis will be checked, before discussing the challenges and ethical issues, which may occur during or after the study.

3.4.1 Coding and Analytical Categories

Having constructed adequate coding is essential, when it comes to 'the production of meaningful inferences'. It is also considered to be the time consuming part of the research. 'Data must initially undergo open coding, a process where the data is examined line by line and various emerging themes are identified' (Black, 2009, p.25). The current study expects themes such as femininity and sexuality, but this does not necessarily mean that they will appear in the findings.

As the main task of a content analysis is to look at and examine a body of text, or in this case articles, the crucial factor is to provide clear definitions of what is being counted. These aspects will be listed in the following paragraph and are an essential part of for the construction of a coding schedule. The categories are linked to the research questions and hypotheses, in order to narrow down what can be characterised and counted.

Due to the main source of the articles (LexisNexis) no original pictorial content was available with the text, therefore other sources had to be taken into

consideration. Articles with original picture content were found at the online archives provided by the relevant newspapers and in the Irish Newspaper Archive.

As this content analysis is of qualitative nature in combination with some quantitative factors, the main focus lies more on the meaning of the text instead of general numbers, which is ideal when researching a specific case. It is all based on the interpretation and the examination of the connection between the text as well as the possible influence it can have on its audience. (Schreier, 2012) This can be done by defining the dimensions and characteristics and not just count 'what can be counted or on the basis of what lends itself easily to counting' (Hansen et al., 1998, p. 106)

The analytical categories chosen are inspired by a content analysis carried out by Ericsson in 1991, when he analysed 'the representation of crime, law, and justice in broadcast and print news' (Hansen et al., 1998, p. 108). The categories defined for the study of the Amanda Knox trial include: general information such as the *name of the medium* (newspaper) and the *date of the publication* (day, month and year) as well as the *position within the medium* (page number) and *the author*.

In order to examine more closely the information provided by the articles, the *amount of suspects* who were named in the publication will also be counted. The articles will be classified in *terms of their coverage* based on their 'value judgements'. This is done by investigating the reporting style and the use of language in order to measure the newspaper's stance before and after Knox's conviction, which is tending toward 'guilty', 'neutral' or 'not guilty'.

All successfully identified *pictures used in the articles* will be investigated in terms of *who is displayed* and *what can be seen*. For the analysis of the language, the *defined list of keywords* will also be taken into account, as well as the overall *length of the article* (word count). The analysis of the newspaper's vocabulary is important as 'words manifest the underlying semantic concepts used in the definition of the situation...the choice of one word rather than another to express more or less the same meaning...may signal the options, emotions, or social position of a speaker' (Van Dijk, 1991, p. 53). Another important aspect is the *headline used in the articles*, as they describe the current situation but also 'signal the social or political opinions of the newspapers about the events [the trial]' (p. 53), at the same time they evaluate these events and give a hint about the paper's sense of 'ideological implications'.

Finally, these headlines in combination with the list of keywords and potential judgement by the newspaper, define *the overall tone of the article*, which can be categorised as before mentioned in tending toward a verdict of guilty, neutral or not guilty – as therefore either favourable or not favourable toward Amanda Knox or any of the other suspects mentioned.

3.4.2 Construction of a Coding Schedule

After defining and choosing the analytical categories, a coding schedule in 'a codable form' needs to be created, as well as a codebook, which contains guidelines. Definitions also need to be set before the analysis can be conducted. (Hansen et al., 1998) A coding schedule can be compared to a survey questionnaire as it includes 'variables which are to be coded... each article...sets out the values or coding possibilities associated with the variable' (Hansen et al., 1998, p. 116).

One coding schedule will be completed for every newspaper article. Meaning, the actual process of analysing the articles is done by reading through each article and then filling in the coding schedule, based on the findings of the individual article.

PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AMANDA KNOX CASE	
PUBLICATION	1. Daily Mail 2. Mail on Sunday 3. The Daily Telegraph 4. The Irish Examiner 5. BreakingNews.ie <div style="text-align: right;">--</div>
DATE-MONTH-YEAR	-- / -- / ----
POSITION (Page Number)	--
HEADLINE	
AUTHOR	
ARTICLE LENGTH	---- Words
AMANDA KNOX FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knox as the major focus out of the three accused - Dealing with Knox's arrest, her conviction and her time in prison - Focusing on Knox's and Meredith Kercher's nationality - Focusing on Knox's sexuality and drug use - Covering Knox's appearance and looks during the trial - Providing information about the general phenomenon of female offenders, mentioning Knox as a specific example
SUSPECTS NAMED	-- (Including Knox)
NEWSPAPER JUDGEMENT (Overall Tone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guilty - Neutral - Not Guilty

VOCABULARY (KEY WORDS IF MENTIONED AND HOW OFTEN)	'Female' _ _ 'Amanda Knox' or 'Knox' _ _ 'American' or 'America' _ _ 'British' or 'Britain' _ _ 'Sex crime' or 'Sex' _ _ 'Drugs' _ _ 'Murder' _ _ 'Alleged' _ _ 'Guilty' _ _ 'Foxy Knoxy' or 'Knoxy' _ _ 'She-Devil' _ _ 'Student' _ _
USE OF PICTURES	- Yes - No
PICTURE CONTENT	- Amanda Knox - Raffaele Sollecito - Rudy Guede - Meredith Kercher - Amanda Knox and Raffaele Sollecito - Others

Table 2 – Coding Schedule

3.4.3 Data Preparation & Analysis

The size of the sample provided by four newspapers means that all data may be analysed manually, known as the 'by hand' method. The preview tool for viewing PDFs by Apple will be used to search for the keywords. The overall data will be stored and analysed within Excel files.

The data will be examined by addressing the fundamentals of the research questions and the overall definition of the research problem. In order to explore patterns and potential trends, data containing the different types of newspapers ('quality vs tabloid') will be analysed, as well as the comparison of the coverage during the different periods of the trial (before and after the first trial conviction).

Before looking at the more complex data, such as the use of language and the indication of a newspaper judgement on Amanda Knox, basic information of the main

categories will be analysed. These main categories contain data regarding the overall topic of the article, the authors and the type of newspaper, as well as the length and position (page number) of the item. As some articles were taken from the newspaper's online archive, the name of the author and the original page number may not be available.

3.5 Ethics and Challenges

As there are no 'real-human participants' involved in the data-retrieval part of the research and therefore no vulnerable population, ethical dilemmas are not envisaged in that context of this study.

There are several challenges, which could and have appeared while conducting the research. The intensive amount of coverage the trial received internationally made it a challenge to narrow down the sample. The original idea was to compare Italian and British publications, as Italy is the initial source behind the Knox case, based on the fact that the murder happened in Perugia in Italy. As this was not possible, due to the language barrier, two English-speaking countries (United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland) were chosen instead.

The accessibility of those articles, as they were published from 2007 till 2009, required the use of different databases and other online sources, as well as archives. As explained, the tabloid paper *Irish Daily Mirror* was supposed to be involved in the content analysis as part of the Irish newspapers but even though intensive research was done, the articles were not available in the required form. Generally, gaining access to the articles and archives, turned out to be more time consuming than originally expected, as each article had to be downloaded separately and checked if they fulfil the set requirements in terms of the word count. In addition, the sample of Irish publications was rather small, as even though there were a lot of publications reporting on the case, only a small sample of publications provided the needed number in order to be representative (20 articles in total).

Finally, as the analysis of the use of language and the picture content published by the newspapers are based on researcher's interpretation, the results and findings may not always seem fully representative to others but this is an argument, which can be applied to every content analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

4.1 Introduction

The findings and results presented in this single chapter are all based on the aforementioned content analysis. The chapter is structured by starting off with the syntactical aspect of the analysis, introducing findings, which could be expressed numerically, combined with the visual illustration of charts. Following this is an in-depth analysis of the reporting style and language used by the newspapers, which are then interpreted and presented in a thematically based analysis.

4.2 Syntactical Analysis

4.2.1 Articles

According to the LexisNexis news database, during the 9th of November 2007 to 13th December 2009 period, 117 articles relating to my search criteria were published in Ireland and a total of 903 articles in the United Kingdom. The sample of 80 articles, which were taken from three different newspapers and one online publication, was transcribed for further analysis. For equal representation, 20 randomly chosen articles were taken from each online publication, tabloid or broadsheet newspaper. As LexisNexis does not provide original picture content with their articles, some of the articles were sourced in external databases, from both the newspaper itself and online archives provided on their homepage, or from the Irish Newspaper Archive. Additional information such as word count and name of the authors, if available, were taken from LexisNexis.

4.2.2 Word Count

The analysis only included articles with a minimum word count of 200, with the exception of one article, which contained 197 words. Figure 2 illustrates the average word count of all 20 articles categorized by publication; it can be seen, that most articles in the *Daily Mail* or the *Mail on Sunday* had the highest average with 899 words. In contrast *Irish Examiner* articles had only 322 words on average. It is noteworthy, that shorter articles seemed to be focusing more on the reporting of news aspects and statements made during the first trial, while longer pieces provided more background information about the case and the private life of the female suspect, Amanda Knox.

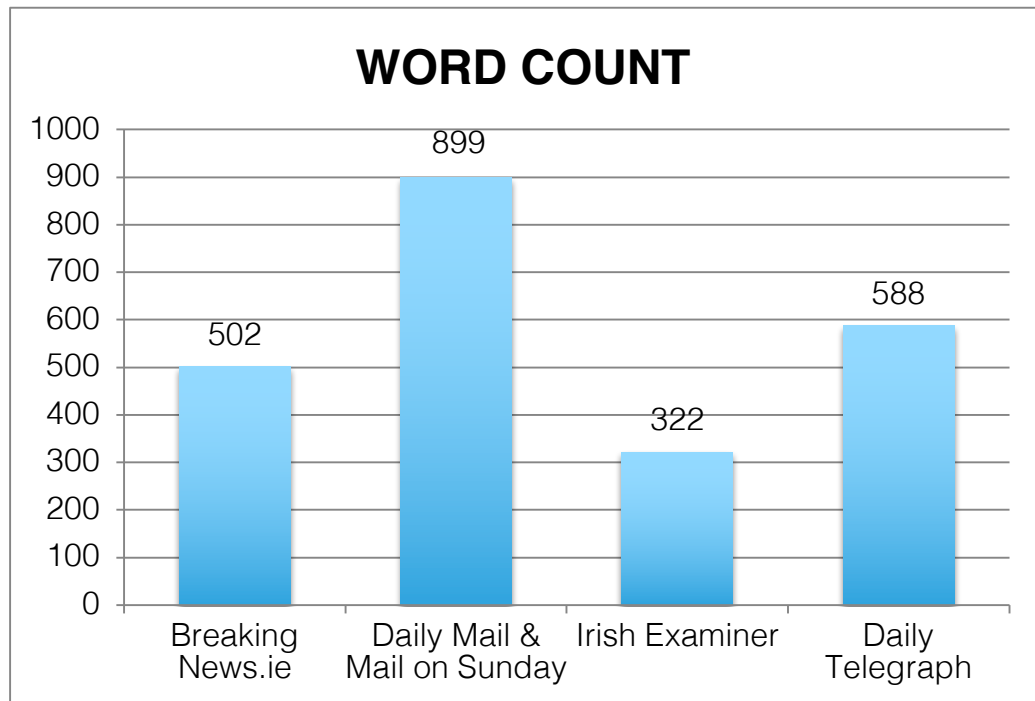


Chart 1 – Word Count

4.3 Focus Points

In order to categorize the articles in terms of their content, six different factors, described as 'focus points' have been set:

1. Knox as the major focus out of the three accused
2. Knox's arrest, her conviction and her time in prison
3. Knox's and Kercher's nationality
4. Knox's sexuality and drug use
5. Knox's appearance and looks during the trial
6. Providing information about the general phenomenon of female offenders, mentioning the Knox case as a specific example

As most articles featured more than one of the listed factors, some articles contain multiple amounts of points.

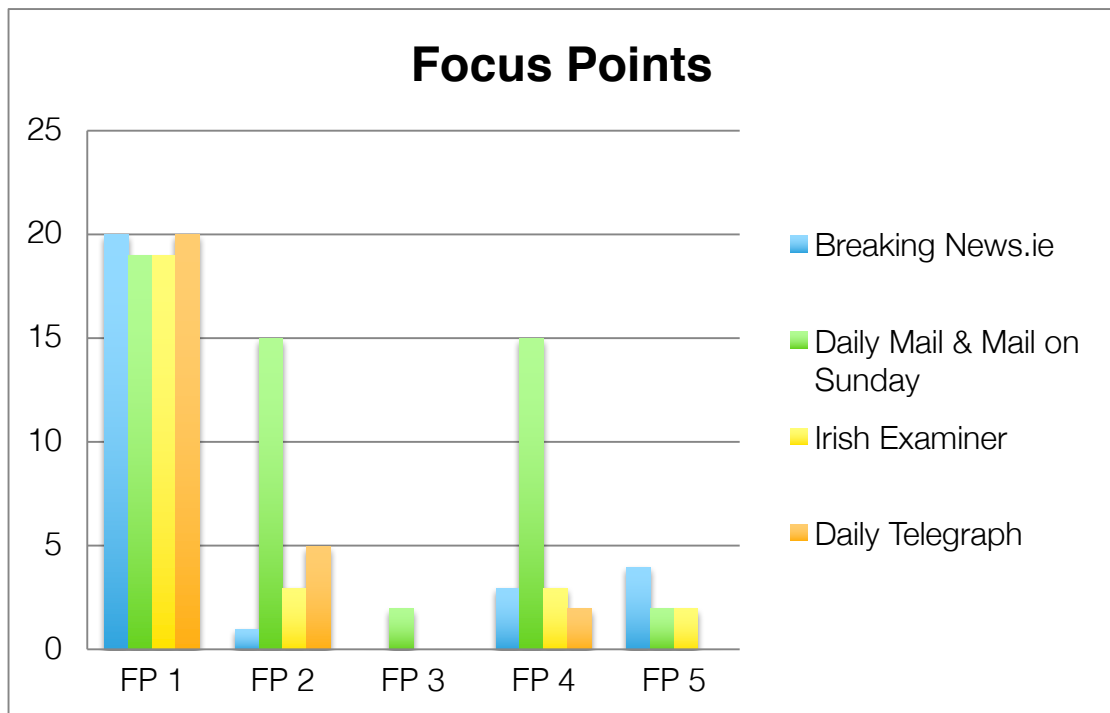


Chart 2 – Focus Points

The overall main focus that nearly every article (78 out of 80) applied, was the fact that female offender Amanda Knox, received the most coverage out of all the suspects, and was mentioned prominently in every article.

Focus point (FP) six on the other hand (addressing the phenomenon of female offenders) was not found in any of the articles and thus left omitted in Figure 3 above.

Examples of reporting on private matters, and therefore non-factual case coverage, could be seen in the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*. Their coverage was consistently fixated on Amanda Knox's private time in prison (FP2) as well as her sexuality and her alleged drugs use (FP4), with 15 articles out of 20 containing FP2 and FP4 points. This finding suggests that the British tabloid set their sights more on the global entertainment aspect surrounding the Knox case, rather than the more objective and neutral reporting. This assumption will be looked at later on in the paragraphs on the use of language and the thematically based analysis. Another standout feature in the figure is FP 3 on the victim and the offender's nationality, which was also only objectified and discussed by the *Daily* and *Sunday Mail* publications.

Another interesting find was that the online publication *BreakingNews.ie*, even though they hardly had any pictures with their articles, wrote more about Knox's appearance and looks during the trial (FP5), then the other three publications. This could represent a possible compensation for the missing pictures.

4.4 Graphics and Pictures

4.4.1 Amount of Pictures

Overall 118 pictures were analysed in 80 articles. While *BreakingNews.ie* only published one photograph (showing the victim Meredith Kercher), the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday* take up 71% of the total number of published pictures (84 in total). Only three articles by the tabloid had less than two pictures. This again, speaks for the typical visually strong style of tabloids and an associated entertainment factor, in order to attract the reader's attention. The *Irish Examiner* and the *Daily Telegraph* have published 19 and 14 pictures overall.

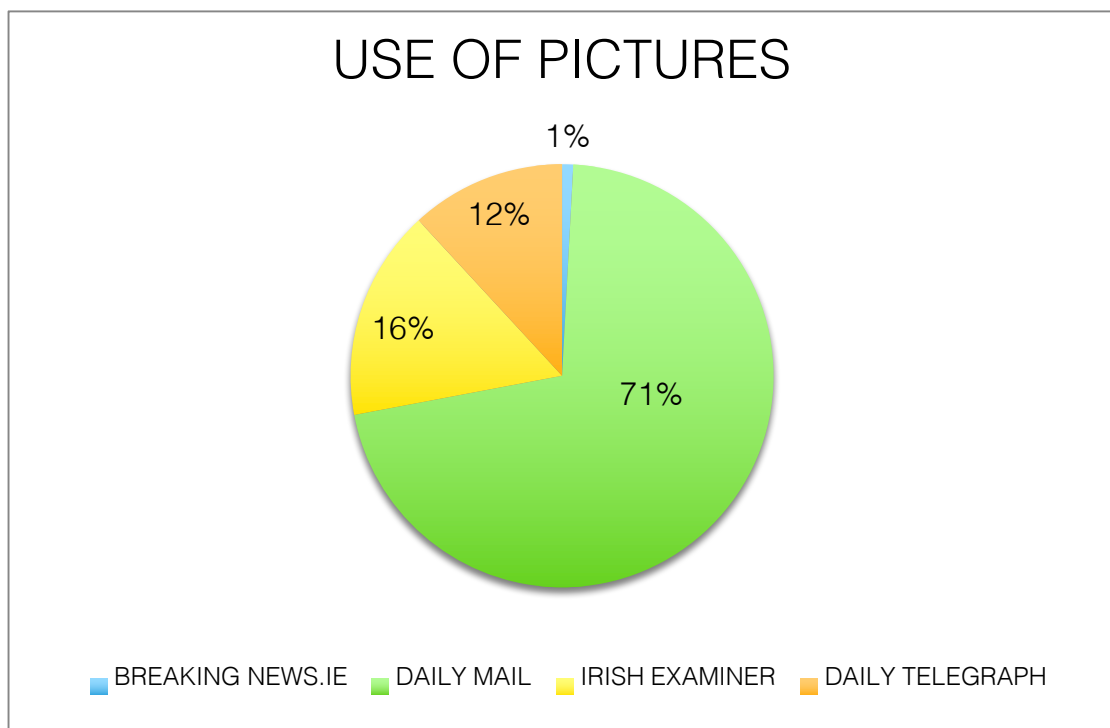


Chart 3 – Use of Pictures

4.4.2 Picture Content

Photographic content is an important aspect, not merely to attract the reader's attention. The visuals can potentially influence the audience's perception of the crime and who or what seems to be the main suspect.

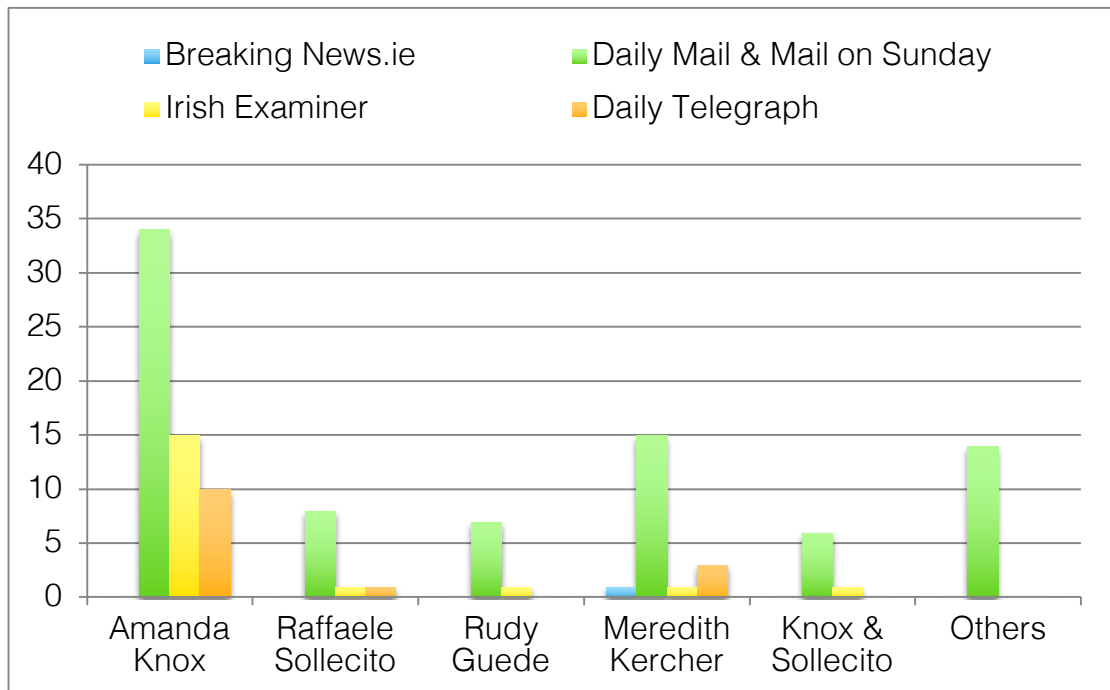


Chart 4 – Picture Content

As expected, Amanda Knox appears in most of the pictures. With 59 out of the total of 118 available photos, every second picture displayed Knox. That number increases when adding those in which she was depicted with her former boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito.

Some of the pictures used of Knox clearly question not only her mental stability but also insinuate her guiltiness. The photo of Knox taken in a German museum, where she poses with what seems to be a machine gun, along with her own capture that she is 'a Nazi inside' was found in nearly every newspaper. Her laughing and joking while posing with the gun in a bright yellow dress, doesn't only imply her involvement in the killing but simply demonstrates an overall feeling of 'evilness' about her, which hints at form of character assassination. This assumption continues with another photo of Knox, where she was photographed with other guests at a costume party, dressed up as princess holding a red cup, suggesting the consumption of alcohol.

The portrayal of the victim Meredith Kercher on the other hand, represented by a rather small selection of 20 photos in the overall article count, accurately reflects the content of the articles. All the photos used of Kercher show her either smiling and laughing or posing happily with a friend, leading back to the articles saying that she was of a friendly and energetic nature.

The photos used of Knox and Sollecito mostly show them kissing outside or are captions of CCTV footage taken the day after the murder happened. According to the newspapers, the pair was out shopping for underwear, which again indicates the ruthlessness of both offenders, based on the media's coverage.

Portrayals of Sollecito and of the third suspect Rudy Guede, are rather casual. They are either photographed in the courtroom or depict the men outside in a neutral display, mostly using headshots.

Other photos, which appeared in the publications, were black and white pictures taken from the crime scene or included family members of either the Knox or the Kerscher clan, showing them inside as well as outside the court, looking sad or in thoughtful positions.

4.4.3 Key Words

Each article was searched for the given list of key words, which had been set while constructing the coding schedule.

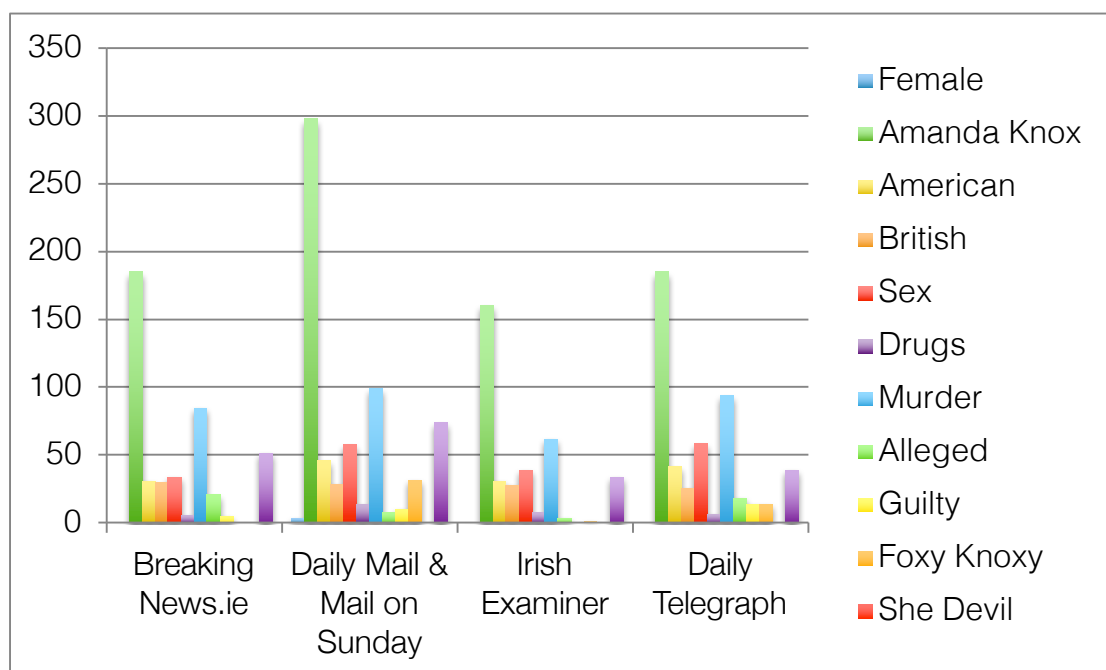


Chart 5 – Key Words

Spread over the 80 articles, 'Amanda Knox' ('Amanda' or 'Knox') was the main key word and mentioned over 828 times, with the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* mentioning Amanda Knox about 15 times per article. This finding can be justified on the basis of the paper's high amount of average word count (899 words).

Considering the gap between the average word count of the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* and the *Daily Telegraph* (588 words), it is interesting that the *Daily Telegraph* used the expression of 'murder' 94 times in their articles while the British tabloid mentioned it 99 times.

Another outstanding figure by the British tabloid is the usage of the nickname 'Foxy Knoxy', which was originally used by Knox as her username on the social media platform *Myspace*. *BreakingNews.ie* did not use Knox's nickname at all while it appeared just twice in the *Irish Examiner*. The *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday* included it over 32 times in their articles, while the *Daily Telegraph* used it 14 times. This high amount is surprising, as the paper is categorized as a broadsheet and therefore a high quality newspaper, which was expected to be less judgmental than a tabloid paper.

Findings related to the key words 'sex' and 'drugs' in the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* were similar to the numbers found in paragraph 4.3, above. But the key words were also heavily found in all other publications, especially the *Daily Telegraph*, which used it 59 times in their articles, that's even one more than the *Daily Mail*.

The depiction of the victim's and the offender's occupation at that time, 'students' studying abroad was, based on calculating word usage as represented in Figure 6, equally represented in the newspapers.

It was *BreakingNews.ie* and the *Daily Telegraph* who both used the key word 'alleged' most often. This could hint at a more objective reporting style and has impact on the overall tone and therefore on the newspaper's potential judgment.

4.5 Use of Language

The use of language is an important tool when it comes to the reporting of the Amanda Knox trial. Not only can it be expressed through the use of key words, but provides the fundamental basis to thematically analyse the media's coverage on the

case.

4.5.1 Overall Tone (Judgement)

The overall tone, or the publication's judgment, was categorized as: 'guilty', 'neutral' and 'not guilty'. While guilty clearly suggests Knox's involvement in the killing of her roommate, neutral focuses more on the actual facts of the trial without hinting any kind of personal judgment (the author's own opinion) in the article. Not guilty, suggests Knox's innocence as well as her wrongful imprisonment as well as her conviction.

All articles were categorized based on their use of language, the content shown in the photographs and the overall display of Amanda Knox as a female offender as well as in comparison to the other suspects involved in this case. This interpretation was done as objectively and accurately as possible. However, it is based on one personal judgment only. There might be articles where readers would categorize them as 1,5 (neutral on the verge of guilty, or the other way round) but in order to evaluate the data, one particular judgment had to be chosen.

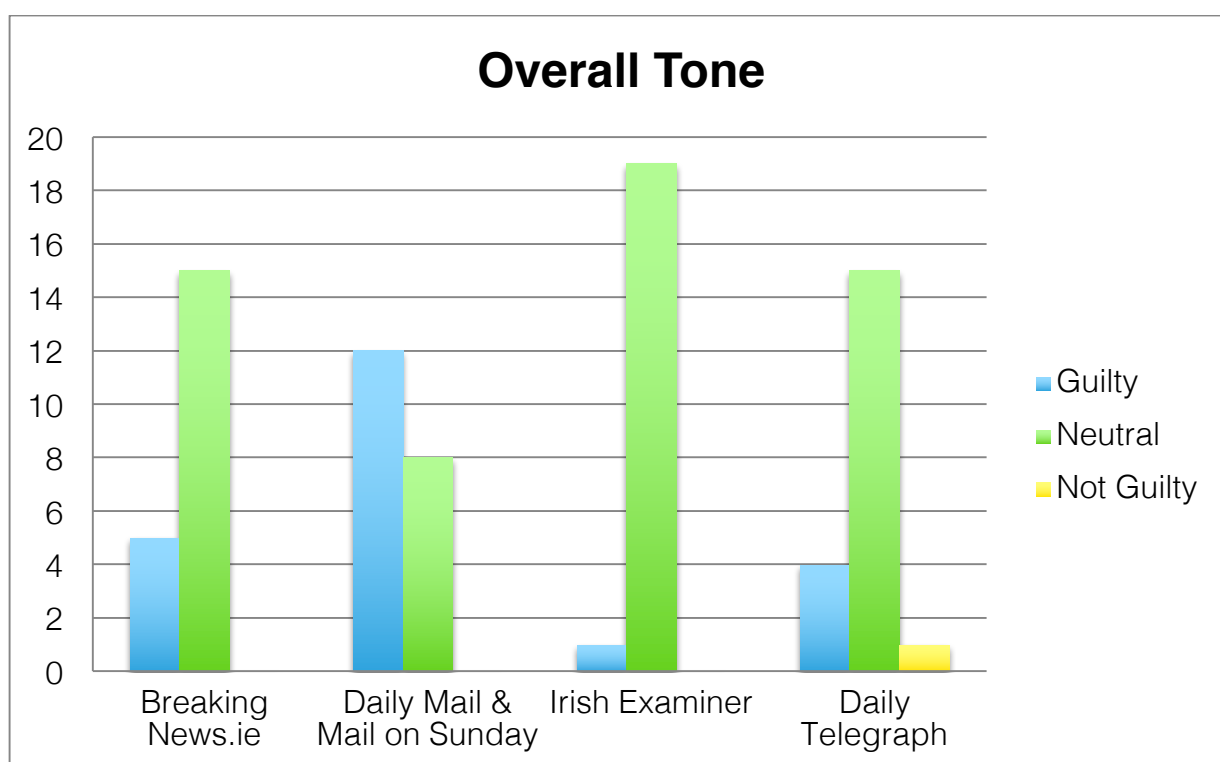


Chart 6 – Overall Tone

The most 'neutral' reporting was done by the *Irish Examiner*, followed by *Breaking-News.ie* and the *Daily Telegraph*, leaving the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday* the

least neutral newspaper reporting on this case. This can be seen by looking at chart 6. 12 articles by the tabloid were categorized as finding Knox 'guilty' of the murder, while overall 19 articles by the *Irish Examiner* were evaluated as 'neutral'.

Only one single article, published by the *Daily Telegraph*, was categorized as finding Knox 'not guilty'. Interestingly this applies to an article, which was published after Knox was officially found guilty by the Italian judges (6th of December 2009). The author was seriously questioning Knox's involvement in the killing by bringing forward arguments that questioned not only the Italian justice system, but also considering a potential case of 'anti-Americanism' and therefore was categorized as 'not guilty'.

4.5.2 Named Suspects

The three official suspects in this case, who were all originally convicted, are: Amanda Knox, Raffaele Sollecito and Rudy Guede. Before the start of the trial there was another suspect called Patrick Lumumba, the owner of the bar where Knox worked as a waitress. Lumumba was released and cleared of all charges before the official trial began nevertheless; he was one of a number of suspects counted in the articles.

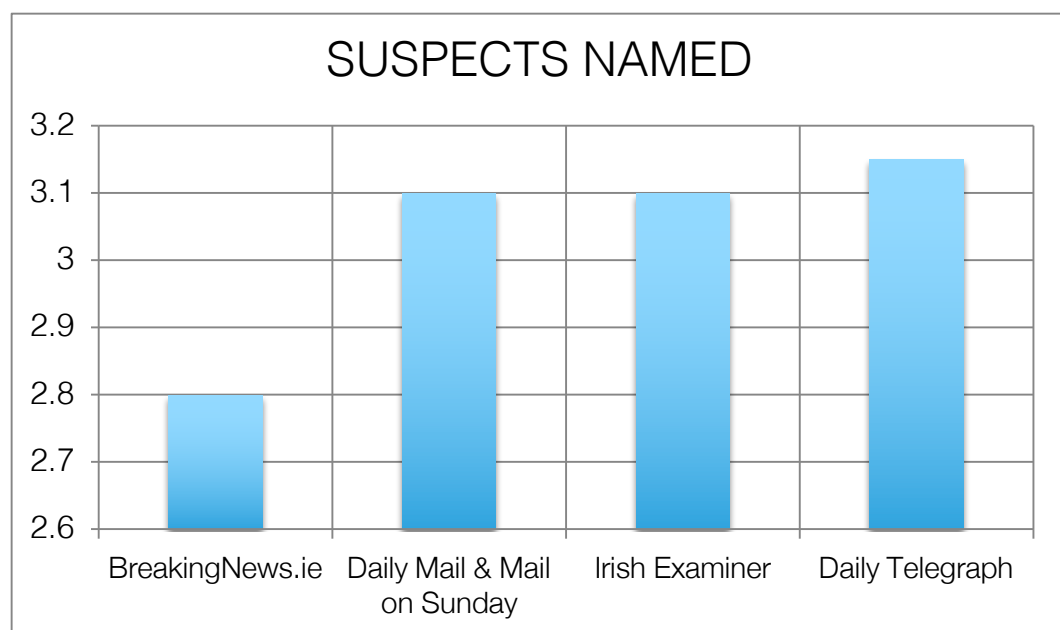


Chart 7 – Suspects Named

The reason for including this chart is simply to question the publication's research and focus. Even though all newspapers named at least three of the suspects mentioned, their main focus was on the suspect of Amanda Knox. The online publication *BreakingNews.ie* for instance, never once mentioned a fourth suspect

being involved in the killing of Kercher, while it was the *Daily Telegraph* who mentioned all of the four suspects more often than any of the others.

This finding is based on interpretation, as it can be argued that because of the release and the clearance of all charges, Patrick Lumumba should no longer have been mentioned, in order to prevent potential defamation and his overall right to a good name.

4.6 Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis is based on the use of language in terms of words or phrases that appeared in the articles. The categories are fundamentals of the themes, which were discussed in the literature review. Some of the findings will lead back on this research, while some arguments purely analyse the statements made by the newspapers or the online publication.

4.6.1 Sexuality & Physical Appearance

As already outlined in the literature review, the attraction and physical appearance of female offenders is an influential factor, which is one of the many reasons leading to heavy media coverage. This argument was also found while researching the articles published by the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*. The paper's intense use of pictures of Amanda Knox (party photos, posing for the camera, smiling innocently) also reflects their use of language. Expressions such as 'wilder than hell', 'man eater', 'desire for casual sex' and 'party loving Knox' illustrate Knox's private sexual life as something potentially dangerous. One article claimed Knox had 'a sexually transmitted disease' suggesting careless promiscuity in her active sex life that negatively influenced her health.

The paper's regular use of Knox's *Myspace* username 'Foxy Knoxy' in their articles, again provides unsubtle hints related to her character's sexuality. The expression 'fox' can be used to either describe someone as willingly decisive, physically attractive or can question someone's mental stability (tangled or confused). (Dict.cc, 2016) Either one of those options can have a negative impact on the public display of Knox. Originally Knox received her nickname from friends and family, who referred to her 'vicious skills on the soccer field'. The presence of her sexuality is reinforced by describing her physical appearance during the trial, informing the readers of Knox's outfit choices, with statements such as 'dressed in a white lace edged blouse and blue jeans' or 'on Valentine's Day she wore a shirt bearing the slogan 'all you need is love', referring to the a song by The Beatles.

In comparison, the *Daily Telegraph* mentioned Knox's appearance on a small scale in their articles, when they questioned Knox's looks, describing her as 'wearing jeans, a sweatshirt and no make up', indicating that the usage of no make up is something unusual. The broadsheet also titled Knox as 'the leader in her pursuit of exciting sex' and 'infamous for her self-styled soubriquet Foxy Knoxy'. On the other hand, the physical appearance of the second accused person during the trial, Raffaele Sollecito, was only mentioned once in all 80 articles analysed.

Another use of sexual elements taken from Knox's life was the fact that she and her then boyfriend went shopping for lingerie the day after the murder happened. Supported by photos taken from the shop's CCTV, the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*, reported that Amanda told Raffaele they would go home and 'have wild sex', while both were described as laughing and giggling during their shop visit. The paper offers Knox's sexuality as an indication for her immorality, and therefore leaning towards insinuating her guiltiness.

There were also articles using her sexuality as a comedic tool. For example an Italian TV station stated that Knox was 'voted top female personality', or the *Daily Mail* sarcastically mocking her as 'The Foxy Knoxy show: smiling murder suspect makes grand entrance as trial begins'.

Interest in the sex life of Amanda Knox was constantly present while conducting the content analysis and could be found merely by looking at some of the headlines: 'The wild, raunchy past of Foxy Knoxy', 'Foxy Knoxy, the girl who had to compete with her own mother for other men' and 'I fired Foxy Knoxy for hitting on costumers'. All of these headlines were published either in the *Daily Mail* or in the *Mail on Sunday*.

Knox's possession of a sex toy, was the basis for the accusation that the 'Italian police "had it in" for Knox' (*Irish Examiner*). The media reporting that she 'had condoms and a vibrator in her beauty case', were a result of these police antagonisms according to Knox.

These finding aren't surprising as, according to Wykes (2001), the themes of sex and violence are inseparable in this day's contemporary culture.

4.6.2 Ideal Womanhood

The ideal of womanhood and the media's strong interest in female offenders was examined in the literature review by looking at the case of Catherine Nevin, known as 'the black widow'. Nevin and other female offenders 'have come under suspicion because of their composure' (Black, 2009, p.41)

Similarly, the way Knox's testimony was reported on, the publications kept pointing out the inappropriateness of her alleged actions and the fact that Knox wasn't showing the stereotypical emotions the media expected. This was then

displayed as suspicious behaviour and lack of interest, which the *Daily Mail* reported as 'Foxy Knoxy showed no emotions'. Also the fact that Knox didn't cry during her testimony and 'laughed and joked with her lawyers' (*Daily Mail*) and 'smiled and chatted with an interpreter' (*Irish Examiner*) before the hearing began, encouraged an implication of her guilt.

The *Irish Examiner's* headline 'Knox did cartwheels after Italian killing' refers to Knox's behaviour the day she and Sollecito were brought in for questioning by the Italian police. The paper reported that, 'the woman...performed a series of bizarre gymnastic stunts in front of detectives immediately after the killing' and 'had a strange attitude'. This behaviour does not indicate Knox's guilt. It also has nothing to do with the actual trial or Knox's involvement in the alleged killing.

The fact that Knox went shopping for underwear with Sollecito the day after the arrest, not only addresses her sexuality or physical appearance, but also is based on an ideology concerning 'womanhood'. The natural or expected reaction after a loss would be grief, but as everyone deals with their emotions individually, some do not display their feelings openly. This could potentially apply to Knox and Sollecito. It is not necessarily a sign of guilt, unlike how the newspaper depicted their behaviour when they wrote 'shopping for sex lingerie after Meredith's murder' (*Daily Mail*).

4.6.3 Alcohol and Drugs

Based on the key-word search, the usage of alcohol but especially drugs was found in a significant number of articles. While alcohol was only briefly mentioned, it was Knox's occasional consumption of marijuana ('every once in a while') that caught the media's attention. It was the *Daily Telegraph* that reported on Knox's 'pet poisons, which were vodka and strong marijuana'. This created an image of the party loving killer, known for 'illegal drugs and easy sex'.

According to Knox's testimony, she and Sollecito smoked cannabis before they allegedly killed her roommate. Based on her statement given in court, their alcohol and drug consume was suggested to be a contributing factor for the execution of the alleged killing, or as the *Irish Examiner* called it 'a drug fuelled sex game'. The *Daily Telegraph's* headline 'Amanda Knox had sex and smoked cannabis on the night of Meredith Kercher murder' was used as a selling headline and rather misleading. In the actual article, drugs were only mentioned once where Knox describes that Sollecito 'prepared a joint and then we smoked it together', while the overall reporting by the broadsheet was categorized as neutral and not judgmental.

It was also reported, that the police found several marijuana plants in the garden where Knox and Kercher shared their flat, but none of these allegations were officially confirmed by the Italian police.

Overall, Knox's drug use was found in several articles and headlines and was a contributing factor in the forming of her character assassination and the overall negative display by the Irish but especially the British press.

4.6.4 Nationality

While conducting the content analysis, the victim and offender's nationality was constantly to be found. In nearly every article it was mentioned that Amanda Knox was either 'American', from 'the US', 'Seattle' or 'Boston', while the victim Meredith Kercher was referred to as 'British' or 'Briton'. Sollecito was often described as 'the son of an Italian doctor', referring to his father's occupation as unusual, as most offenders do not have a wealthy or well educated family background. (Ministry of Justice, 2012)

Based on the research terms, containing two British newspapers, it was less than surprising that Meredith Kercher's British nationality was illustrated more often in British than in the Irish publications.

It was the third suspect's nationality that gives rise to concern. Rudy Guede's nationality was often reported as 'Ivory Coast citizen', 'Ivory Coast national' and also named in a negative combination such as 'Ivory Coast-born drifter and casual labourer' (*Daily Telegraph*).

That the nationality of a female offender is of crucial importance can be seen in the reporting in the *Daily Telegraph*, where Knox's nationality was framed in a whole article called 'Meredith Kercher trial: Hillary Clinton meets senator campaigning for Amanda Knox'. The article talks about a flawed trial and how the whole situation 'has opened the floodgates to a wave of antipathy in America towards the Italian justice system.' The author continues by stating that a group of American citizens are boycotting Italian products in order to make a statement and summarises the overall representation of Knox by the American media, which display her as 'the innocent abroad' who un-deliberately became a victim of the Italian justice system.

4.7 Conclusion

Even though two suspects were on trial for the same murder (the third suspect Rudy Guede was already convicted due to a fast track trial), it seemed like only one suspect received all the international media coverage – the female offender Amanda Knox. Her then boyfriend Sollecito was indeed mentioned in nearly every article related to the crime but in comparison to Knox, he seemed rather uninteresting for the

global coverage. It was especially the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday* that had taken an active part in the character assassination of Knox. With headlines such as 'Amanda Knox: Behind the Hollywood smile, a liar, a narcissist and a killer', they constructed a myth around the character of Knox. She was depicted as a men eating American student, with the desire for casual sex who couldn't share the spotlight with other attractive women. This (according to the newspaper's judgement) made it more than reasonable to decide that she killed her roommate during a drug fuelled sex game that went wrong. All these words were used in articles published by the *Daily Mail* and confirm the assumption, that there is a gender gap in crime reporting, especially when it comes to murder. The combination of brutality and sex, the physical appearance, the nationality and the use of drugs, made this case a bestseller not only for tabloids but also for the overall press landscape.

The *Daily Telegraph* was the only newspaper, which issued concerns over the reporting of Amanda Knox and how she was displayed in the media. The *Telegraph* even called out tabloid press practices in Britain by criticising "'hang 'em high" headlines [tabloids] usually reserve [...] for women'. Nevertheless, even though the overall reporting by the *Daily Telegraph* was fairly objective (15 articles categorised as neutral), the broadsheet didn't shy away from using Amanda Knox's sexuality in their articles ('brought home several one night stands').

The same applies to the online platform *BreakingNews.ie*, even though of tabloid nature, the publication preserved a neutral tone, with three-quarters of their articles suggesting objective coverage. The fact that they hardly used any pictures does undermine their tabloid status. It could perhaps be marked more as a middle market publication in this case, though their overall reporting on other events is still very much tabloid inspired.

The *Irish Examiner* covered the case most objectively out of all analysed publications, but had the smallest overall word count. This may speak for their attempt to focus on the essential facts of the trial, rather than providing potentially misleading background information, which could influence the reader's opinion.

Overall the content analysis showed that there are massive differences in the reporting of murder trials with female and male offenders. Information which doesn't seem relevant to the trial, such as physical descriptions, family history and sexual content, was exploited to create an entertaining media event, which might have cost Amanda Knox the right to a fair trial and most definitely the right to her good name.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the rise of the feminist movement, the issues of how the media represents females are still present and cannot only be found in the Western nations but in all parts of the world. Every day the media treats women as sexual objects or forces them into fitting the traditional domestic role. In an UNESCO funded study in 1979, Margaret Gallagher stated that she was concerned that the issue of the representation of females in the media would be an issue for decades to come:

'The...media are potentially powerful agents of socialization and social change – presenting models, conferring status, suggesting appropriate behaviours, encouraging stereotypes.' (p.3)

Margaret Gallagher was right. With the invention of the World Wide Web and the 24/7 accessibility to news channels, streaming sites, and the option of consuming media on the go via mobile versions, the media's influence has grown even more. This growth has also impacted the framework of how women are displayed and consumed as 'media products', especially in the genre of crime. Gallagher's statement is still applicable to today's situation and it does not seem like a lot has changed. Women offenders are still forced to fit the stereotype of ideal womanhood, motherhood and physical appearance.

The case study of Amanda Knox certainly shows that her sexist representation and imagery fits into the trend of some newspaper's shifting more towards the celebrity and light entertainment area (a theory which was suggested by Byerly and Ross, 2006). While the news media is supposed to report 'the real world' and provide information based on facts, it's often the necessary context that is missing. In the case of Amanda Knox, the newspaper's context of the importance of her sexuality and the trial was completely missing, because in reality her gender as well as her physical appearance had nothing to do with the actual trial and the given evidence.

The whole trial reportage was based on character evidence. This includes Knox's looks, her family history, her sexuality and her overall appearance. She was objectified for the news discourse and for the sake of 'a good story'.

Byerly and Ross (2006) explained that on the basis of 'presenting a reality that excludes/includes, and emphasizes/plays down certain facts' (p. 39). In the Knox case a reality was constructed, where Knox's supposed love for sex was emphasized, while the actual circumstances of the crime were belittled. The character assassination of Knox has strong resemblance with Shakespeare's Lady MacBeth. The media displayed Knox as the classic femme fatale, who enjoys to manipulate the people around her and slipping into the character of the evil monster.

This also brings in aspects of femininity, which are mirrored by factors of biology and psychology, previously discussed in the literature review and the findings by Frigion (1995). On the other hand it reflects Marsh and Melville's theory (2014), that the physical attraction of the female criminal can overshadow the actual crime. Looking back at the results of the content analysis, which can back up Marsh and Melville's assertion, the overall idea was to find out if there are differences between the reporting styles of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, based on their coverage on trials involving female offenders. Also how this reporting impacts the image of the female offender in the public eye.

In terms of linguistic and gender representation, the British tabloid *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* were most judgemental out of the four publications analysed. The newspaper stayed true to their house style, which is known for its sensationalism, throughout the trial. Their intensive use of pictures showing Amanda Knox in delicate situations such as partying with friends or posing with a machine gun, were inherently consistent with their textual content. The tabloid exploited Knox's sexual past and constructed a persona ('Foxy Knoxy') who was willing to go above and beyond to get what she wants, even though that meant murdering her own roommate out of jealousy.

As for the Irish online publication *BreakingNews.ie*, the reporting was far more objective than expected from a website, which is known for its rather light entertainment content. The fact that they did not use any pictures (except for one of Kercher) and stayed away from sensationalised headlines, endorses a sense of professionalism. Their used headlines were rather short and always based on facts or statements, which were released throughout the trial. They also contained the victim's name (Kercher) more often than the offender's (Knox), out of all four newspapers examined.

The British broadsheet the *Daily Telegraph* kept true to their reporting style in an objective manner but used a large amount of sensationalised headlines, which did not seem to fit in with the rest of the content. The reporting and the use of language were objectifying Knox's sexual past but in a less judging manner than the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday*. Nevertheless, for a broadsheet type quality newspaper the use of 'Foxy Knoxy' and other sexual related terms do not match with their usually professional court reporting.

Finally, the *Irish Examiner* covered the trial in the most neutral way out of all newspapers. They hardly addressed Knox's sexual past, her family background or her physical appearance. The newspaper also had the overall lowest average word count, it is therefore suggested, that the information provided by the broadsheet was limited to facts rather than speculations.

All analysed articles mentioned and pictured the female offender Amanda Knox more than any other suspect (all other three suspects were men). As a result, it can be said that the media deals with the reporting of female offenders differently than with the reporting of male offenders, judging on this case.

While Knox's private life was put under the microscope, hardly any of the male suspects were stereotyped by their past behaviour or sexuality. Only once a Halloween outfit by Raffaele Sollecito was mentioned, where he was dressed up as a 'bloody doctor' holding a knife and a bottle of bleach. The fourth suspect and later cleared bar owner Patrick Lumumba, was portrayed as a family man, who 'couldn't harm a fly' according to his wife. Rudy Guede on the other hand, did not seem to be of any particular interest to the media. While he was already convicted at the time the trial of Knox and Sollecito started, he was only mentioned in terms of his past abuse of drugs and the fact that he is originally from the Ivory-Coast.

All together it can be said, that a lot of the analysed articles contained misleading headlines in terms of what was actually discussed in the text. This applies to tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, as well as the online publication.

Due to the same ownership of the *Irish Examiner* and *BreakingNews.ie* a potential crossover was examined but no particular similarities in terms of content, judgement or use of language were found.

Overall the study was limited in terms of Irish publications, even though the case was largely reported in Ireland, most publications could not provide the required amount of articles, in order to be representative. In addition, the sourcing of the Irish articles was limited due to out-dated databases and the overall lack of availability in the given timeframe.

The case of Amanda Knox is an example of a story in which her looks and sexuality appeared to be a weapon used to assassinate her character. For potential future studies, different cases in which other women have experienced a similar amount of coverage and perceived similar treatment could be compared to each other, on the basis of the media's seeming passion for coverage of female offenders. The overall study on the Knox case could also be expanded for all British newspapers and compared to the coverage of the US, as Knox is an American citizen and this may have impacted the coverage on the trial and her overall representation. This would provide an insight into the American coverage of the trial regarding the aforementioned 'anti-American' bias and how the press dealt with these allegations.

Another way to approach future recommended studies, would be to compare similar cases involving female offenders, based on the categories of sexuality, physical appearance, nationality and the use of drugs or consumption of alcohol. Then work out the common factors and differences, which would then be compared to similar cases involving only male offenders. The media presence, the picture

content and the overall linguistic use, would be described and evaluated with the tool of the male glaze, which was described in the literature review as originally used by Wykes and Gunter. The idea behind it would be to analyse the potential framing of the media, to the benefit of men. The same could be done the other way round, evaluating all cases with a male offender, based on the media's framework to benefit women.

Finally, when comparing similar cases involving female offenders, the overall change in reporting over the last few decades could be examined. In terms of how the reporting has changed since the feminist movement came to a growth and if more women working in the media industry and especially in the field of journalism, has impacted the reportage on female offenders. This could be combined by bringing in the aspects of technology and the constant accessibility to news and unfiltered information online.

To get a deeper insight into the media's impact on the forming of public opinion, a survey could be carried out, to measure the audience's perception of the crime. This would involve showing different newspaper articles on female offenders, also involving pictures, and how the audience would categorize (guilty or not guilty) the offender based on the newspaper content. Along with aspects of gender related topics such as physical appearance and sexuality.

As far as the future reporting on female offenders goes, it is upon the social, cultural and political elite, to reform the way women are represented in the media. This issue is not only present within newspapers but with the whole male-oriented media industry itself. In order to change the stereotypical public perception of women and especially those accused of committing a crime, out-dated strategies must be left behind and replaced with the balanced power of gender. The overall gender gap needs to be addressed as a fundamental part of education. This could be done by not only positioning more females in the media industry but to create media enterprises owned and run by women. In this way females can speak for themselves and fight the inequality in the media and the way women are reported. According to Anderson and Zinsser (1988) the creation of women owned publications and electronic media, plays an important role 'in the formation of consciousness and the building of women's movements' (p.208). More women owned media enterprises or news services, would mean growth in power of controlling the agenda setting, as well as the overall reporting on females, which would mean independently moving away from the male dominance. But due to thin financial resources, operating feminist media enterprises are rare. Nevertheless, they are important in order to 'provide the strongest assurance that women will speak in their own voices when such matters [such as social injustice] arise' (Bakker, 1994, p. 229).

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Appendix

List of Articles

Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday:

'I heard Meredith scream ... then covered my ears' (08.11.07), page number not available, Nick Pisa and Beth Hale

'MEREDITH "HELD DOWN BY FRIEND"; Flatmate took part in deadly sex attack on British student - police' (09.11.07) p.1, Nick Pisa and Beth Hale

'Foxy Knoxy, the girl who had to compete with her own mother for men' (10.11.07) p. 26, Sharon Churcher

'Meredith's father says she found Foxy Knoxy flatmate "eccentric"' (11.11.07), p.5, Nick Pisa

'Compulsive liar Foxy Knoxy now insists she wasn't at "house of horrors"' (12.11.07) p. 23, Nick Pisa and Beth Hale

'Meredith murder: How Foxy Knoxy keeps changing her story' (23.11.07) p.23, author not available

'Pictures of the moment Foxy Knoxy went shopping for sexy lingerie the day after Meredith's murder' (24.11.07) p. 7, Beth Hale

'I fired Foxy Knoxy for hitting on customers: Patrick Lumumba reveals why he was framed over Meredith's murder' (25.11.07), p. 26, Antonia Hoyle

'The wild, raunchy past of Foxy Knoxy' (01.12.07), p. 40, Andrew Malone

'Meredith sex killing: Foxy Knoxy changes her story... again' (02.12.07), p. 17, Nick Pisa

'Foxy Knoxy "gave herself away by revealing a murder detail only the killer would know"' (24.12.07) p.25, Nick Pisa

'Foxy Knoxy protests innocence and details her many lovers - and her fan-mail - in prison diary' (25.6.08) p. 11, Nick Pisa

'Wrongly accused Meredith murder suspect to sue after bad publicity caused his business to shut down' (14.09.08) p. 36, Nick Pisa

'Did you kill her? Foxy Knoxy is quizzed in court face-to-face with family of murdered British student Meredith Kercher' (17.09.08) p. 11, Nick Pisa

'We'll clear her name, sob Knox parents as Meredith killer gets 30 years for her murder' (30.10.08) p.11, Mail Foreign Service

'The Foxy Knoxy show: Smiling murder suspect makes grand entrance as trial begins' (17.01.09) p.7, Nick Pisa

'Sister tells of Foxy Knoxy's panic over Meredith's killing' (05.05.09) page number not available, Emily Andrews

'Foxy Knoxy plays the field from her jail cell with new romance' page number not available, Nick Pisa and Helen Dowd

'Amanda Knox: Behind the Hollywood smile, a liar, a narcissist and a killer' (05.12.09) page number not available, Tom Rawstone

'Amanda Knox "a victim of anti-American trial" as campaigners urge Hillary Clinton to launch investigation' (05.12.09) page number not available, Daniel Boffey

The Daily Telegraph:

'Good girl gone bad, or innocent in mourning?' (11.11.07) page number not available, Andrew Alderson and Adam Lusher

'Meredith's body home as Knox changes story' (12.11.07) page number not available, Bonnie Malkin

'Meredith Kercher suspect hopeful of release' (18.11.07), page number not available, Malcolm Moore

'Capture of Meredith suspect is "imminent"' (19.11.07) page number not available, Malcom Moore

'Tape "puts Knox at Meredith murder scene"' (01.12.07), page number not available, Malcom Moore

'Meredith Kercher's killers may have faked sex attack' (31.01.08), page number not available, Nick Pisa

'Meredith Kercher "killed during bungled theft"' (02.02.08), page number not available, Gary Cleland

'Girl "confesses over her flatmate's murder"' (12.04.08), page number not available, Malcom Moore and Richard Alleyne

'Meredith Kercher suspects on brink of being charged' (19.06.08), page number not available, Malcolm Moore

'Meredith Kercher's accused killer "Foxy Knoxy" behind bars after refused bail' (29.10.08) page number not available, Nick Squires

'Amanda Knox was shopping on the morning Meredith Kercher was found dead' (17.11.08), page number not available, Nick Squires

'Amanda Knox "covered ears to block out screams"' (13.03.09) page number not available, Nick Squires

'Amanda Knox "had sex and smoked cannabis" on night of Meredith Kercher murder' (12.09.09) page number not available, Nick Squires

'Meredith Kercher murder trial: Amanda Knox a victim of "character assassination"' (13.06.09) page number not available, Nick Squires

'Amanda Knox: doubts over reliability of DNA evidence, court hears' (15.09.09), page number not available, Nick Squires

'Amanda Knox "a she-devil who destroyed life of innocent man"' (27.11.09), page number not available, Nick Squires

'Meredith Kercher killed "because sex game went too far"' (03.12.09) page number not available, Nick Squires

'Family of Meredith Kercher speak of heartache over missing "Mez"' (05.12.09) page number not available, David Harrison

'Amanda Knox: guilty... but of what?' (06.12.09) page number not available, Ola Craig

'Meredith Kercher trial: Hillary Clinton to meet senator campaigning for Amanda Knox' (06.12.09) page number not available, Tom Leonard

Irish Examiner:

'Flatmate "covered her ears as student screamed"' (08.11.07) p. 16, Wesley Johnson

'Suspect in British student's death caught on CCTV' (13.11.07) p.13, author not available

'Reports state Meredith "may not have been sexually assaulted"' (16.04.08) p. 14, Craig Woodhouse

'Meredith murder suspect pair meet in court' (27.09.08) p.13, author not available

'Meredith murder: 1 guilty and 2 to stand trial' (29.10.08), p.14, author not available

'Knox ,"naive, but no murder", trial told' (01.12.09) p.12, Paolo Santalucia

'Knox lawyers claim charges not proven' (02.12.09) p. 14, author not available

'Italian police "had it in" for Knox' (03.12.09) p.14, author not available

'Knox "upset" as post-mortem video shown in court' (04.04.09) p. 13, author not available

'Knox makes final appeal to jury' (04.12.09) p.15, Marta Folconl

'Knox claims police beat her during murder probe' (13.06.09) p.13, Marta Folconl

'Suspect "joked" after finding pal's body' (14.02.09) p. 12, Alessandra Rizzo

'Murder trial rejects bid to throw out indictments' (15.09.09) p.12, Marta Folconi

'Kercher trial to be held in public' (17.01.09) p. 14, Rosa Silverman

'Footprint "wrongly attributed" in murder case' (19.09.09) p. 13, Marta Folconi

'Parents of Kercher murder suspects take the stand' (20.06.09) p.15, author not available

'Knox killed roommate out of hate, court hears' (21.11.09) p.13, Marta Folconi

'Stress may have confused Knox during questioning: Doctor' (26.09.09) p. 12, author not available

'Knox did cartwheels after Italian killing' (28.02.09) p.13, Marta Folconi

'Knox trial: Witness says scream "made her skin crawl"' (28.03.09), p. 13, Marta Folconi

BreakingNews.ie

'Flatmate confessed she "heard British student die"' (07.11.07) page number not available, author not available

'British student "had throat slit in satanic rite"' (18.10.08), page number not available, author not available

'Suspects blame each other in Kercher murder case' (25.10.08) page number not available, author not available

'Roommate testifies in Kercher murder trial' (07.02.09) page number not available, author not available

'Alleged killer of British student "had neck wound"' (14.02.09) page number not available, author not available

'Student in Kercher trial "had scratch on neck"' (14.02.09), page number not available

available, author not available

'Witness spotted suspects after Kercher murder' (28.03.09) page number not available, author not available

'Witness tells Kercher trial suspect brandished knife' (28.03.09), page number not available, author not available

'Kercher accused "eager to give evidence"' (24.04.09) page number not available, author not available

'Kercher murder weapon "bore suspect's DNA"' (23.05.09) page number not available, author not available

'Murder victim's mother fights back tears in court' (06.06.09), page number not available, author not available

'Kercher mother gives emotional testimony' (06.06.09) page number not available, author not available

'Knox gives evidence in Perugia' (12.06.09) page number not available, author not available

'Bloodstained footprint "does not link Italian to Kercher murder"' (18.09.09), page number not available, author not available

'Knife shown in Kercher murder trial' (19.09.09) page number not available, author not available

'Computer evidence could prove student's innocence' (26.09.09) page number not available, author not available

'Knox parents investigated for defamation' (28.11.09) page number not available, author not available

'No proof Meredith was killed by Knox' (01.12.09) page number not available, author not available

'Closing speeches continue in Kercher trial' (03.12.09) page number not available, author not available

'Knox "scared" but always "hoping"' (13.12.09), page number not available, author not available